

THE 20 GREATEST GADGETS IN THE WORLD TODAY

stuff

GADGETS / APPS / GEAR



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SHOWDOWN**
THE TOP THREE
TECH TICKERS

**iPAD AIR 2
NEXUS 9
FIGHT!**

2014 GADGET AWARDS

THE TECH OF
THE YEAR

E4.60
January 2015
www.stuff.tv

haymarket



CANS OF WHOOPASS

On-ear headphones:
we test the best

PARTY LIKE IT'S 2024

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from the future

CASE AND STATUS

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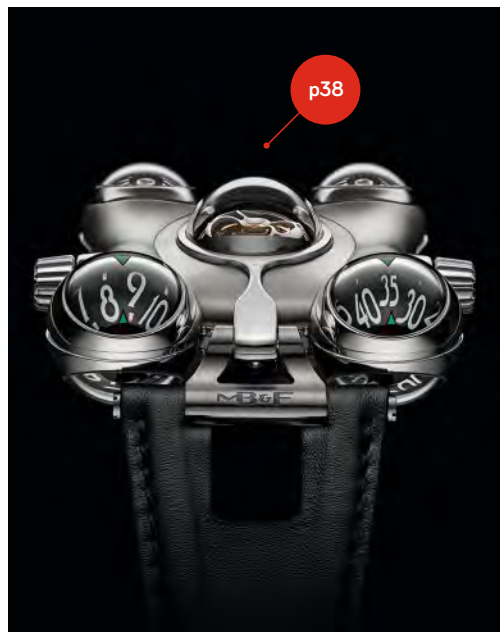
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TOUCH SHARPER



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ON THE
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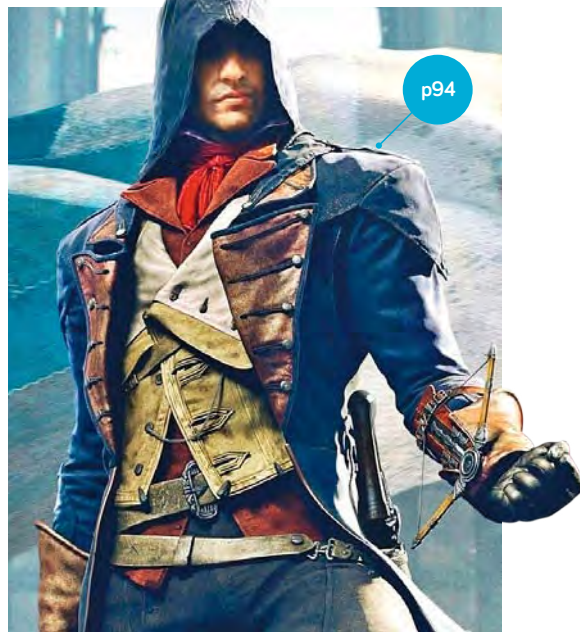
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Wear?



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01.15



TOP 10 OF EVERYTHING

Looking to buy something but need a bit of advice? Turn to our *Stuff* Top Tens: our expert listings of all gadgetry, from p131

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HOT BUY



MacBook Air (2014)

★★★★★

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NEW ENTRY



SoundMagic E10S

★★★★★

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NEW ENTRY



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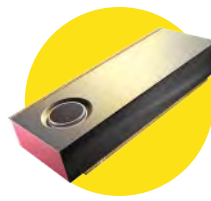
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 - 3D-print a new face ● Make a word cloud
 - Turn your handwriting into a font

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WELCOME



If you only read one copy of *Stuff* this year, make it this one. Obviously I'd recommend you read more than one, but I'll admit to being a little biased; personally, I love finding out about things like **boats that go 125mph**

(p90), **robot orchestras (p77)** and ways to make your own **voice-controlled confetti explosions (p124)**. But this is the issue that distills a full year's worth of careful testing by our experts into one big, fat, tasty list. We've spent thousands of hours poring over every piece of tech that's been released in the last 12 months: squinting at screens, running down batteries, turning things off and on again really quickly, and occasionally dropping them, if it seems like the sort of gadget that should be able to take a knock. The result is the definitive guide to the best technology of the year: the **2014 Gadget Awards (p49)**.

And the testing continues: we've pitted the two tablets battling for a place under your Christmas tree on p98, we've rated the three best smartwatches in the world (p111), and we've spent a month with our new favourite phablet (p100). If you're a human being or sentient computer and you're thinking about buying anything this year, this is the data you're looking for. **S**

Will Dunn, Editor / wild@stuff.tv / [@willydunn](https://twitter.com/willydunn)



THIS MONTH IN STUFF'S DIGITAL EDITION

- Animated, interactive pages, videos and more hi-res pictures
- Video footage of a man playing a drum kit made out of magazines

Android fan? *Stuff* is also available on **Google Play**, **Zinio**, **Exact Editions** and Samsung's **Papergarden**.



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2...a thumbsUp!
Dual Power Bank (p116).
3...exclusive reader offers.
4...a slightly higher resolution universe.

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Go Deeper



H

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HOT
FOUR
#1

THE COPTER WILL SEE YOU NOW

DJI Inspire 1

If you take a big metaphorical drill and burrow into the bedrock of movie history, you'll see a thick band of imaginary sediment laid down in the recent past: that's the year 1976. It was in 1976 that a man called Garrett Brown took his new invention, called the Steadicam, round to a few movie sets. Sets like *Marathon Man* and *Rocky* and, most notably, *The Shining*. The Steadicam gave cameras the power to pivot and swing and to float down corridors like ghosts, but

the Inspire isn't just a camera-holder. It's a camera that can fly over 4km in the air, shooting video that's twice as sharp as most cinema projectors. One person can fly it while another directs the shot, looking through the lens from up to a kilometre away. It could change movies as much as, or more than, than the Steadicam – if there's another Kubrick or two out there...

As hot as... imaginary lava
from £2380 / dji.com

U

F

F

21 PAGES
OF THE BIGGEST
STORIES FROM
PLANET TECH

[TELL ME MORE](#)**1 It's got legs**

The rotor-bearing arms pivot and fold downwards, providing legs for the Inspire to land upon. Like a fun, friendly, flying machine-spider.

2 It plays the gimbals

The camera unit shoots 4K at 30 frames per second, but it can be swapped out, so in the future you can add an 8K camera. Or a water pistol.

3 It's behind you

A software upgrade will allow you to trace a route on a tablet and have the Inspire follow your path, or set it to trail you at a set distance.

HOT
FOUR
#2AT LONG LAST,
WE'VE GOT
FLYING CARS**Aeromobil 3.0**

Well, we say 'we', but actually it'll be a while before the *Stuff* team saves up for a carplane, and even then we'll have to have a big argument about who gets to drive. But we as a society have been waiting for flying cars since shortly after cars became a thing, and it's been a long wait, but at last they're starting to appear. The Aeromobil is entirely road-legal, runs on regular petrol and can be parked on the street with its wings retracted; but drive it to your nearest airfield, extend the wings, take to the skies and you can go 120mph in a straight line. Try doing that in a Lamborghini (don't, obviously).

Ashotas... a flying car, of course
£tba / aeromobil.com

**ALTERNATIVELY...****C-Explorer 5**

Flying cars are all very well, but what if you live under the sea?

You'll need this five-seater sub, which will take you down to 300 metres in comfort.

Epoa / uboatworx.com



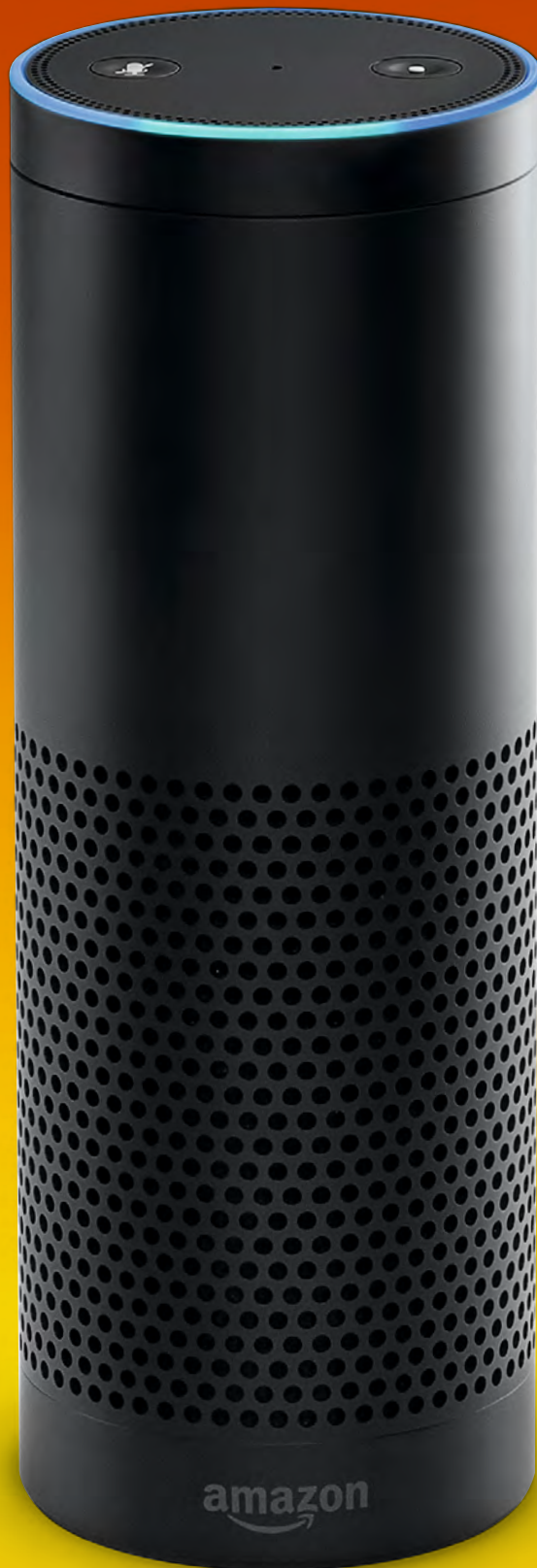
HOT
FOUR
#3IS THERE AN
ECHO IN HERE?

Amazon Echo

We know what you're thinking: why the crivens is a standard Bluetooth speaker occupying a page that could be taken up by, say, a personal submarine, a sentient helicopter with eyes or even just a really brilliant Scalextric track? You know how we know that? Because the Amazon Echo told us. It's not just a speaker, you see. It's a homebrain, a computer that is perpetually listening for commands using a ring of seven 'far-field' microphones. Say "Alexa" (or a phrase of your choosing) and it wakes up and takes notes: ask it questions, tell it to set reminders and alarms, use it to control your increasingly smart smarthome. Oh, and it plays music too. Sometimes via Bluetooth.

Ashot as... Siri's anger management chip

US\$200 / amazon.com/echo



HOT
FOUR
#4THE FAST
AND THE
FLOOR-IOUS
Scalextric ARC One

There are many reasons your Scalextric Grand Prix could do with a spruce-up. There's the off-road section created by a wayward glass of Irish cream, there's the chicane that was badly scuffed during a post-race debate, and there's Offensive Corner, so named since the dog's single disastrous foray into small-scale racing.

Fortunately, you don't have to buy a whole new set: plug the ARC One into your track, connect it to your phone or tablet, and suddenly you have a very next-gen Scalextric. Timed starts, lap counters and top speeds are all shown, and you can set up races to include pit stops, fuel usage and tyre wear. We know what we want for Christmas.

Ashotas... that hot-egg smell the cars get after a couple of hours' racing

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*Visible flakes seen at 2ft with regular use
†Due to breakage



HP WANTS TO BLEND OUR REALITY

HP Sprout

US\$1900 / sprouthp.com

Place an object here, scan it and you can start manipulating it on screen



It's a desktop PC with a 3D scanner, touchpad and projector to start remixing your analogue stuff in a digital space...

● **Is that computer wearing a baseball cap?**

Aha, you've spotted the special bit. The Sprout is the first product in what HP is calling its 'blended reality' range, that mixes physical with on-screen interaction. You know, like in all sci-fi movies, ever. At its core the Sprout is a 3.2GHz quad-core Intel Core i7 CPU with

8GB RAM that runs Windows 8.1. But unlike most Windows PCs, it has the 'HP Illuminator' – that eye-catching combo of a normal 14.6MP camera and the Intel RealSense camera up there above the screen, plus the 20-point touchpad underneath. It can still be used with a normal keyboard, although you can just type on a projected one.

● **What's a RealSense camera?**

An array of cameras and sensors that enable 3D scanning. You'll be able to take a piece of paper, book, model or other object, scan it in

and start manipulating it on screen. At the moment it can only handle 2D scans, but in 2015 a tilted turntable for 3D scanning is on its way. HP is billing it as a tool for creatives and has released an SDK to encourage third-party apps that make it more useful. Microsoft has even made a Sprout-optimised version of its Office software so you can finally be a 'creative' too – hurriedly slapping together PowerPoint presentations in no time flat by scanning in your crazed doodles and desktop junk.



A TILTED TURNTABLE WILL ALLOW YOU TO SCAN OBJECTS IN 3D

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at the results.”

nivagni, boots.com, Jan 2014



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[†]Due to breakage

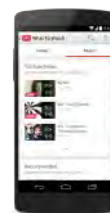
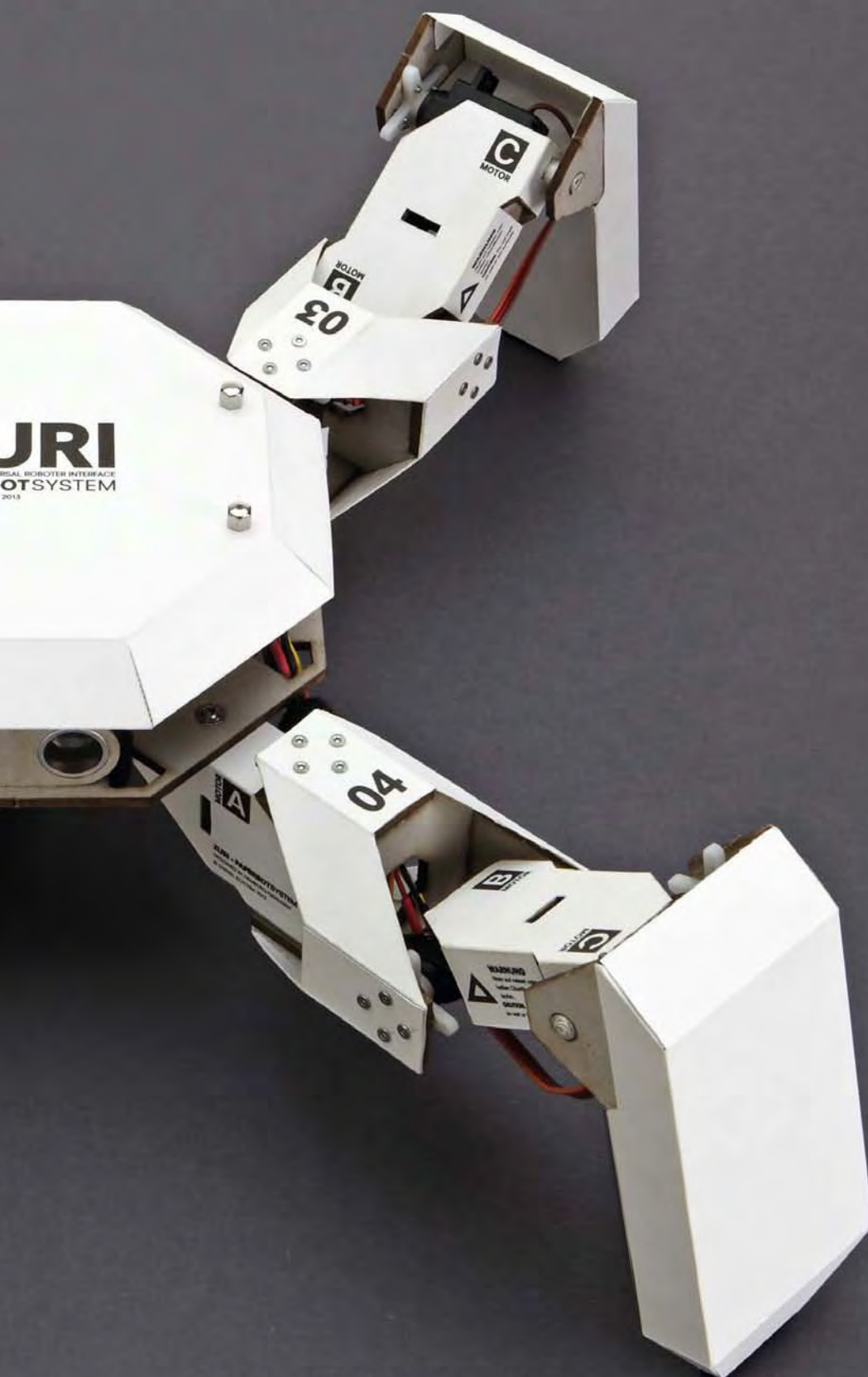
*Winner Shampoo & Hair Treatment Category, Survey of 11,941 people in UK & ROI by TNS



CARDBOARD BOTS

One of the problems you face when you're assembling an army of spider-bots to do your evil bidding (you know, like Gene Simmons in *Runaway*) is settling on a design. Four legs or six? Square or oblong? Lasers or spinning blades? Zuri (zoobotics.de) is a robot kit that helps you answer those difficult questions: you build the carapace from card, which means you can break it down and remake it until you're cackling with mad, satisfied laughter.





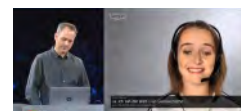
SONGS IN THE KEY OF YOUTUBE

What's the most popular music streaming service? Spotify? Nope – YouTube. For years the world's video pool has streamed audio, but now it's doing it properly: MusicKey is a premium service (£10/month) that offers ad-free, offline listening. See ya, Spotify.



GIFFGAFF OFFERS 4G FOR £12

It's the network of choice for people who wear a jumper rather than putting the heating on, and hold a steady 55mph on the motorway 'for the mpg'. And at long last, Giffgaff is offering some of the UK's most wallet-friendly 4G, at a miserly £12 for 1GB/500 minutes and £18 for 5GB/1000 minutes.



SKYPE RELEASES THE BABEL FISH

Microsoft Research unveiled something rather incredible back in May: real-time translation between two different languages in a Skype call. That tech has now made it out of the lab and into a limited preview: try it for yourself at bit.ly/skypebabel

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★★★★★

LG G3, Stuff.tv, 24th June 2014



NAMES TO DROP #12

John Hanke THE MAN WHO MAPPED THE (GOOGLE) EARTH

John Hanke has been helping people find their way in the world for years. He co-founded Keyhole, the 'geospatial visualisation' company that became Google Earth, then took over the team that created Google Maps and Street View. Not content with turning everyone's phone into a near-perfect navigation device, he left the Geo division to head up Niantic Labs, one of Google's ideas factories. Since then, he's helped create Field Trip, an app that tells you about interesting stuff nearby, but that's just the beginning: his goal is to get us playing location-aware games that use the real world as the ultimate level map.

I've always loved maps.

National Geographic was a big thing in the States when I was a kid. They always had the giant fold-out maps of the Nile and Egyptian culture, and I could spend hours imagining going to these interesting places. Back before computers, that was an escape.

I look to early video games for inspiration.

I worked on one of the first true MMO games, called *Meridian 59*. It was a precursor to *Ultima Online*, *EverQuest* and *World Of Warcraft*, and that taught me patience. That's something I brought to Google Earth – to know that these things take time to grow in people's minds. For the technology to evolve, you really have to be in it for the long run.

The technology I'm focused on right now is augmented reality.

There's a book called *Rainbow's End* by Vernor Vinge that paints a picture of a future where everybody has implanted augmented reality capabilities. Everybody lives in this stylised

version of the world that suits them, and people play games overlaid on their surroundings. I think that's a technology that's going to happen – it's going to take a decade or more, but it will happen.

That's why we're making alternate reality games (ARGs).

Our first is called *Ingress* – it's a strategy game. Our first event was held in sub-zero weather, but 75 people showed up and played *Ingress* all day. At our last event we had 2000 people in Munich, plus another 1500 in the US and another 2000 in remote cities. All of those people are operating on tactical plans on the day, which they have been working on for weeks.

Wearable tech could make ARGs even better.

I can imagine playing *Ingress* completely through a smart watch, talking to the people around me, tapping my watch, and every now and then using an earpiece: using the tech in a way that's a lot less disruptive than the phone is now.

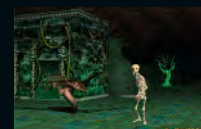
Our new ARG, *Endgame*, also uses an old-school technology: books.

We are taking a set of characters that are connected to the lead characters of the novel *Endgame*, and they are going to engage with the players of *Endgame* the game. We'll evolve the story based on how the game develops, in much the same way we've done with *Ingress*, while the *Endgame* books are also progressing. It's just a much more open-ended, flexible, immersive, longer-lasting way of telling a story. I think it's the future for certain types of story, those where you really want to create alternative worlds. You'll start with a giant palette, creating the universe, and then start making different narratives and experiences within it. If Tolkien was around today, he would do that.

Visit thisisendgame.com for more information.

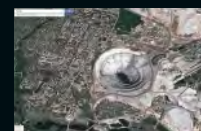
"I CAN IMAGINE PLAYING INGRESS WITHOUT A PHONE, JUST USING A SMARTWATCH AND AN EARPIECE"

YOU MIGHT KNOW ME FROM...



Meridian 59 (1996)

The first 3D massively multiplayer game, *Meridian 59* is the grandfather of *World Of Warcraft* and, more lately, *Destiny* – and it's still going. Players who are killed in the game lose all their possessions, which leads to a lot of high-stakes duelling.



Google Earth (2005)

This planet-sized selfie has been downloaded over a billion times, and was followed by more far-ranging efforts including Google Moon and Mars.



Ingress

A location-based strategy game. Players install the *Ingress* app on their phones and then take control of 'portals' by physically being near them. By connecting portals together, teams can take control of huge areas. Nerdy, but futuristic.

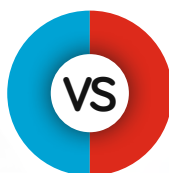


Rolling shutter

PANONO PANORAMIC BALL CAMERA

Throw your ballcam in the motherflippin' air. Know that it'll take pictures at its zenith, like it just don't care. The Panono has 36 separate camera modules and – once a certain amount of stitching magic has been done for you in the Panono cloud – will serve up on your smartphone a fully spherical, 108MP image. You'll be able to scroll up, down and all around your image. That is, once the Panono becomes available, at some point in the first half of 2015.

US\$550 / panono.com



Stubbornly sticking around

RICOH THETA M15

We were more than a little bewildered by the original Theta when it arrived, unexpectedly, at the *Stuff* offices a year ago. "Is there a demand for 360° imageography?" we demanded. The imminent arrival of the Panono above and this updated Theta would suggest that, yes, there is. (Not to mention the 360fly ball-cam that keeps relaunching itself.) This new Theta M15 adds three-minute spherical videos to its ability to take spherical photos. Live view and faster Wi-Fi transfer to your mobile device are promised, and new blue, pink and yellow colours are apparent. It's also £60 cheaper than last year's version. Good news all round...

£270 / theta360.com



DROP EVERYTHING AND DOWNLOAD...

Magzene Efree / iOS

We're used to getting snippets from various websites in our RSS readers, yet for some reason newsagents still don't take kindly to us cutting articles from their magazines and pasting them into our scrapbook while still in the shop. Thankfully Magzene now gives you access to articles from the UK's leading magazines, including such fine titles as *Stuff* and *FourFourTwo*, for perusal at a safe distance from broom-wielding shopkeepers. It also takes note of your choices, brewing a fresh selection of articles for you each week.

The tablet that can replace your laptop.

The new Surface Pro 3 is a tablet and laptop in one. It's thin and light and runs your favourite desktop programs, like Adobe Photoshop, Office and Windows. Work from anywhere with built-in adjustable Kickstand, Surface Pen, USB port, 12-inch screen, and an optional click-in keyboard. The Surface Pro 3. The tablet that can replace your laptop.

Surface Pro 3

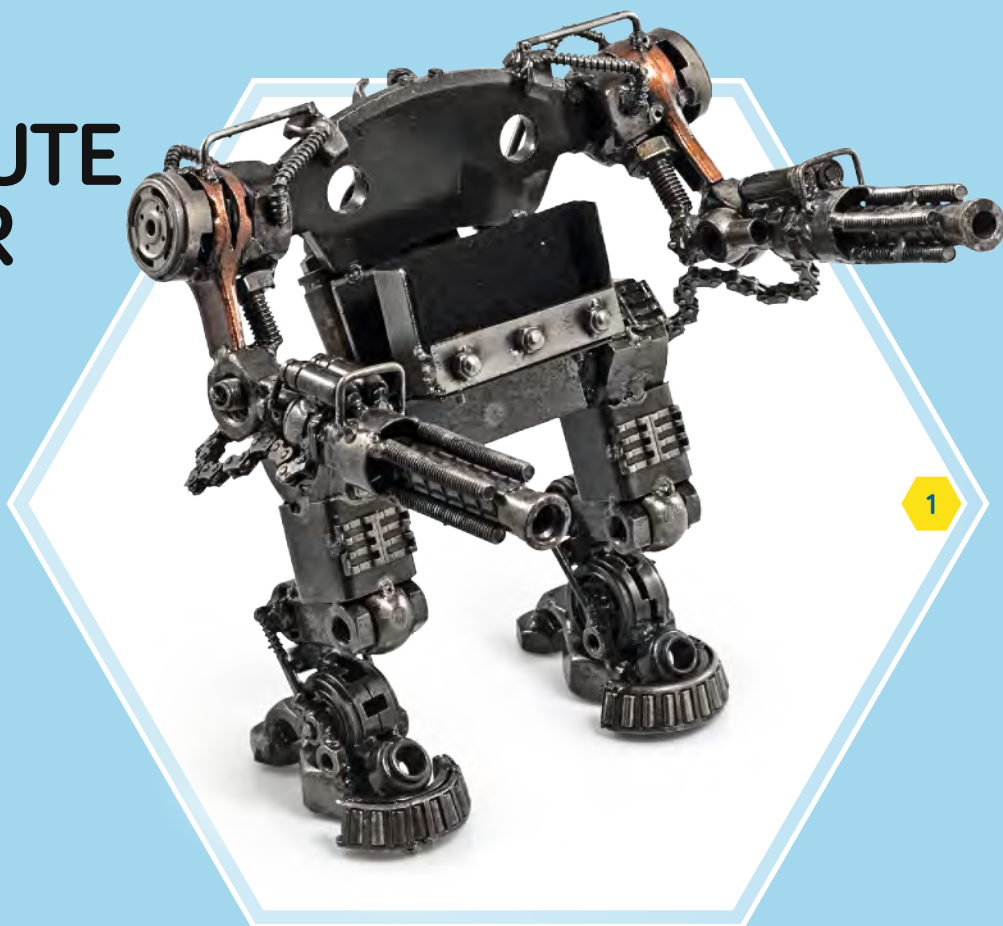


Available from
John Lewis

Type Cover 3, Adobe Photoshop and Microsoft Office sold separately. Adobe and Photoshop are registered trademarks of Adobe Systems Incorporated.

LAST-MINUTE GIFTS FOR GEEKS

It's beginning to feel a lot like Gadgetmas, and you're all out of sub-£50 ideas. Don't worry, we've got you covered...



1

1 Metal Art Mech Warrior Phone Stand

For true *Titanfall* fans, a hand-made stand that turns your phone into a mech warrior is almost as good as a real armoured battlesuit. Well, maybe not, but we are on a budget. [£50 / red5.co.uk](http://red5.co.uk)

2 Drinks By The Dram Tasting Set

You might want to spend £3000 or more on one of Master Of Malt's rare bottles of 40-year-old single malt. Or you might prefer these more affordable, snifter-sized sets. [£20-£50 / masterofmalt.com](http://masterofmalt.com)



2

3

3 Smartphone Projector

It's hardly a 4K projector, but this self-assembly cardboard device will magnify your phone's screen by 8x onto a wall: perfect for sharing YouTube videos of otters. [£16 / luckies.co.uk](http://luckies.co.uk)



4

5

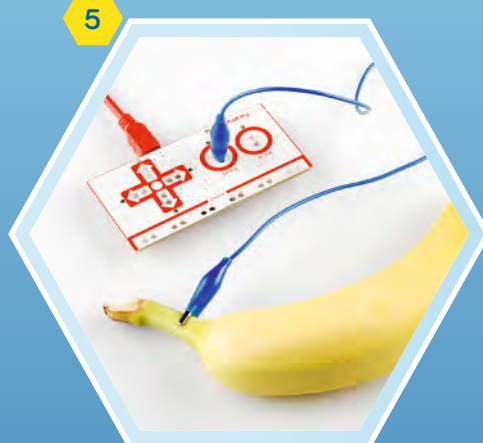
4 The iLog

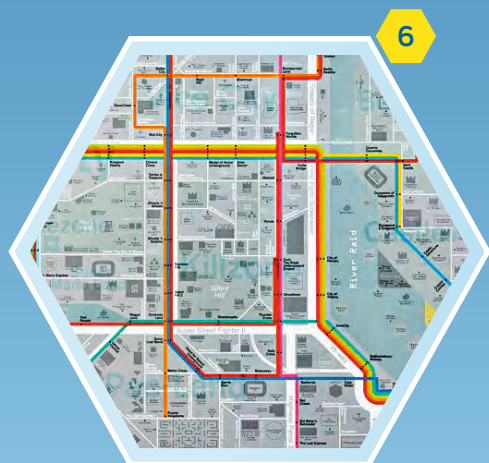
It's an iPad stand, but it's also a log. So, your giftee can use the routed cable hole and slot to keep their iPad (works with all models) upright for working or watching. Or, if they don't like it, they can burn it. [£30 / twistedtwee.co.uk](http://twistedtwee.co.uk)



5 MaKey MaKey Invention Kit

This turns anything into a keyboard or game controller: ideal for keeping your rowdy nephew quiet... until he figures out how to make a synthesizer out of roast potatoes. [£50 / maplin.co.uk](http://maplin.co.uk)





6



7



8



9



10

6 Dorothy Game Map

Over 500 games, characters and locations make up an imaginary city district in this highly stareable print. Great for fans of maps and games, half-great for fans of either maps or games.

£25 / wearedorothy.com

7 Albumcards

You've definitely left it too late to pop down Our Price for an LP, but Albumcards will get a personalised greetings card that's also a digital album in the post for you. Choices are all pretty mainstream, mind.

£10 / albumcards.com

8 AKG K451

As evidenced by a lengthy spell at the top of the *Stuff* Headphones Top Ten (and they're still there), these AKGs offer excellent sound and superb value for money.

They're also light and unobtrusive.

£50 / superfi.co.uk

9 Polar Pen

You're looking at one of the world's most powerful time-wasting devices: a pen made from magnets that can be endlessly clicked, swapped, spun and fiddled with instead of doing any work.

£35 / firebox.com

10 Sky Now TV Christmas Box

Sky's nice new tellybrain comes in a range of limited-edition finishes, from glittery to chic. We'd pick the penguin, and add a two-month Movies pass for £10 more.

£10 / nowtv.com/christmasbox



Still looking?

Our massive Xmas superlist, available free on Apple Newsstand and Samsung Papergarden, contains over 200 gift ideas, £3500 worth of prizes and lots more.

Stone cold data

BLUE MAESTRO TEMPO

Do you need to know the temperature, humidity and barometric pressure in your home? Nope. Do you want a Bluetooth-equipped gadget shaped like a beautiful shiny pebble that will tell you all that via an Android/iOS app, store up to 30 days of hourly stats between downloads and offer up alerts when any of those stats passes a custom-set threshold? Keep talking... How about if it also had iBeacon functionality? Enjoy your new Blue Maestro Tempo, friend!

€60 / bluemaestro.com



Nemesis or superhero?

TRION NEMESIS

Part of the appeal of supercars is their rarity; what, then, could be more rare or exclusive than a 100% American supercar from Orange County, California? At just two years old, Trion is a fledgling marque, but it's promising big things with the Nemesis. The RR variant is predicted to do 0-60mph in 2.8 seconds and reach 270mph+ thanks to a huge twin-turbo-charged V8 engine producing a trouser-melting 2000hp under the rear bonnet. It's not just for whippet-like Italian jockeys either, as Trion claims all models will fit drivers up to 6ft 4in, and some up to 7ft... but makes no mention of maximum girth.

approx US\$1m (due 2016) / trionsupercars.com

Micro-not-so-soft-any-more

MICROSOFT BAND

Microsoft has finally put down the Doritos, eased itself off the sofa and jogged into the fitness arena. Its ingeniously named Band goes the whole hog with built-in GPS and optical heart-rate monitoring, so you won't need a phone or chest strap to track your running stats – although if you do have your phone, it'll display messages and notifications. It's compatible with Android and iOS devices, not just Windows Phone.

US\$200 / microsoft.com



UP TO
£80
CASHBACK
ON SELECTED PRODUCTS*



FIND SOMETHING SPECIAL THIS CHRISTMAS

This winter, let Canon help you capture your most memorable stories with cashback offers and FREE accessories on selected products*. Step into DSLR photography and let your creativity grow with the Canon EOS 700D. From shooting in low light or from a distance, with over 70 lenses in the range you can capture all the beautiful and unpredictable stories you find. Whether it's a present for someone or you're treating yourself, Canon has something special for everyone.

EOS 700D **EF**
Lenses



Search: Canon winter cashback

*Offer subject to full Terms and Conditions - see canon.co.uk/wintercashback
Available on selected European products purchased between 29.10.2014 and 21.01.2015 from UK retailers.

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TO DELIVER A
PICTURE PERFECT
EXPERIENCE



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Designed to give you the most realistic and natural viewing experience ever, the LG Curved OLED TV is designed to deliver a picture perfect viewing experience. With a unique four colour pixel that lets you enjoy the most vibrant colour depth, and an infinite contrast that delivers every detail of even the darkest images, it redefines display brilliance.

www.lg.com/uk/discoveroled



Put the zing back in your swing ZEPP SMART GOLF/TENNIS SWING COACH

You know it's a bad shot: you nearly killed the player on the tee next to you at the range. But which part of your swing caused your near-fatal faux pas? Zepp knows, because it's been sitting on the back of your glove, analysing your last 2000 swings, watching your shaft angle, swing speed, hip rotation and more – yet never expressing its horror out loud – and comparing your performance with the swings of PGA pros. Disheartened, but determined, you fire off another drive; a pigeon drops from the sky, landing unconscious at your feet. Perhaps it's time to try tennis, which Zepp will also analyse.

£130 / zepp.com



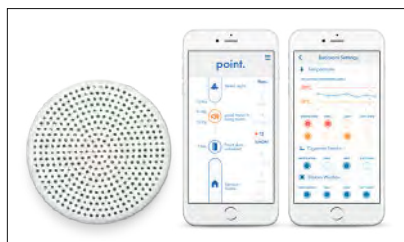
Wandering electronic eyes NETGEAR ARLO

No matter how precious our possessions, wiring up a home surveillance system is still too much of a hassle for most of us. Even Wi-Fi-based systems need cables for power access. Arlo is different, as Netgear claims its cameras will last for up to six months on four CR123 batteries, saving power by only switching on when they detect motion. Footage is sent straight to cloud storage, and they even have night vision for wildlife. You can move them from one magnetic base to another, but how to make sure the bases don't get nicked? More cameras. Netgear's business model becomes clear.

US\$400 / arlo.com

START MENU

The month's best concepts, start-ups, crowdfunded projects and plain crazy ideas



Lives of others

POINT

US\$80 / formdevices.com

You rent your place out on AirBnB and want to keep tabs on it, but installing a camera is, well, creepy. Where cameras watch, Point listens, logging when people come and go by the sound of the door opening, recognising break-ins and detecting smoke – sending it all to your phone. You can also set noise limits, above which Point will flash to remind guests to kindly put a sock in it and profess their love of Blind Big Brother...

Status

Seeking funding (Kickstarter)



Super power

PRONTO

from US\$100 / powerpractical.com

When you're on the go, there's often not enough time to steal a full charge from an airport or cafe socket. The Pronto battery pack solves this by soaking up enough power in five minutes to fully recharge your average phone. The larger of the two versions will hold enough for nine recharges, while they both come with a handy 12v output for charging things that use a cigarette lighter socket, such as a laptop.

Status

Funded (Kickstarter)



Scouting trip

THE FLAME IN THE FLOOD

US\$20 / themolassesflood.com

From the art director of *BioShock* comes this rafting survival adventure. You play Scout, a girl who must navigate the procedurally-generated river of a post-apocalyptic world with only her dog for company. Avoiding the watery perils and wildlife while staving off hunger and illness is the focus of the gameplay, and there are no second chances: once you're dead, you're plonked right back at the top to start again.

Status

Funded (Kickstarter)



? WTF IS THE KORG CLIPHIT?

Well, it's Korg, so it must be...

Something to do with block-rockin' beats. Damn skippy, my friend, and this Korg box o' tricks is to do with drums. Everyone loves a drummer, and do you know why?

No, why?

Because they nearly always have a car, for the portage of their bulky boom-makers. Once you've got a drummer with his or her Nissan Almera, you've got yourself a touring band. But there's a problem: once the car is full of drums, there's little room for Billy the bassist or Charlie the cellist or even Rupie the groupie. Which is why you need to present Daria the drummer with the Korg Cliphit. Three sensor clips attach to any object which, when struck, triggers the appropriate drum/cymbal/sample from the device. There's a foot pedal for the kick drum and the option to add another for some hi-hat action.

Oh, come on, you're suggesting this replaces a full drum kit?

What, you don't think its 2W speaker will be enough to rock Carnegie Hall? OK – it's more of a practice kit, but the novelty of the object-clipping might make it just the thing for encouraging young wannabes for whom a proper kit could be a bit daunting. And loud.

It still looks like a toy...

And it can be that too: there are even silly sounds – dog barks, for example – in addition to its 11 very respectable drum kit set-ups. You can also plug a music source into the aux-in socket to have fun 'jamming along' with your favourite track, whether that's a Fugazi classic or a Disney classic.

£100 / korg.com



Visible to the naked ear MARTINLOGAN NEOLITH

If you crave a transparent performance from your music, then look no further. Not only are these gigantic, 1.8m-tall electrostatic speakers mostly see-through, but they promise to reveal hidden detail in your music. While their sonic capabilities are extensive, electrostatics aren't so big on bass, so luckily for you they're each backed up by a 15in woofer and 12in mid-bass woofer in the base. The Neoliths hope to build on the reputation of MartinLogan's Monolith speakers of 1983, which had a similarly monumental price.

from US\$80,000 / martinlogan.com



Haute volume cuisine SOUND BLASTER X7

The best new games are a feast for the senses, so if you don't have great sound it's like the chef forgetting the meaty part in your steak tartare. The X7 is here to make sure that gaming ear-fodder from your PC, Mac or console thunders, surrounds and enthralls. It does all this with its 100 Watts of power, Burr-Brown DAC, Bluetooth AptX and plethora of connections to hook up with all your hi-fi and home cinema kit. You can tweak the sound via an app, and for those who don't have an anechoic chamber, there's also a built-in headphone amp.

£330 / soundblaster.com

HALO

THE MASTER CHIEF COLLECTION



4 BLOCKBUSTER GAMES ON 1 DISC

EXCLUSIVE ACCESS TO HALO 5: GUARDIANS MULTIPLAYER BETA

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Microsoft
Studios

343
INDUSTRIES

*Halo: Nightfall: 5 episode live-action series is streaming only, and will initially be available on a weekly basis, and then on demand. Xbox One or Windows 8.1 and broadband internet required; ISP fees apply. Halo 5: Guardians Beta: Game disc required. Limited-time beta starts December 27, 2014, and ends January 22, 2015. Must be 17+. Xbox One, broadband internet (ISP fees apply) and Xbox LIVE Gold membership (sold separately) required. Halo: Nightfall and Halo 5: Guardians Beta dates, content, and features subject to change. See www.xbox.com/halo

DUE
20 MAR

FIRST PLAY BATTLEFIELD HARDLINE

PS4, PS3, Xbox One, Xbox 360, PC

Swapping the frontline for the thin blue line, *Battlefield Hardline* puts you in the shoes of a Miami cop called Nick Mendoza.

It becomes clear very early on that this isn't a straightforward first-person shooter. As an officer of the law you can flash your badge and shout "FREEZE!", causing any ne'er-do-wells to reach for the skies. Keep your gun trained on them and you can arrest them, but let them out of your sights for too long (or try it on a whole gang) and they'll laugh in your face. And these people laugh with their guns.

Perps can be identified using the scanner you carry, which tags enemies and adds them to your map, highlights alarms, analyses evidence, and even lets you listen to conversations from afar. It's hardly *The Wire* but at least it gives the illusion of some police work before the bullets start to fly.

Scanning crime scenes allows you to plan your approach – and there's more than just 'sneaky' or 'shooty' to choose from. The game's Fortress Encounters offer multiple routes of attack, and if one doesn't work you can

fall back on another without being unfairly punished.

But *Hardline* still feels like a *Battlefield* game. The guns feel big and heavy, and the environments deteriorate brilliantly when caught in the crossfire (we particularly like the way soft furnishings leave a cloud of feathers hanging in the air when the shooting stops). What sets it apart is its more memorable characters and police-specific game mechanics. Let's hope it lives up to the promise when it's released next year.



FIRST LOOK MULTIPLAYER SHOOTER



OVERWATCH PC

There might be no 'I' in team but there is one in 'team-based multiplayer shooter with a roster of uniquely skilled characters to choose from'. In fact, there are four. Blizzard's *Overwatch* is all about picking a character that'll complement the others in your six-strong team. There are player classes (offense, defense, tank, support) but within that each member of the *Overwatch* team has their own special weapons and talents: Tracer can teleport and reverse time; Bastion is a robot who can turn himself into a mounted gun

turret; and Hanzo can scale walls and activate a tracking device that shows his team-mates where the opposition are. So far there are nine others, with more to be announced. Three maps (London, Egypt and Japan) and two modes have been revealed: Payload requires one team to stop the other delivering a package to a point on the map, while Point Capture sees the two fighting to control a number of different locations. It's a bit like combining *Team Fortress* with the character variation of a classic beat-'em-up.



3 REASONS TO BUY... NEXT-GEN GRAND THEFT AUTO V



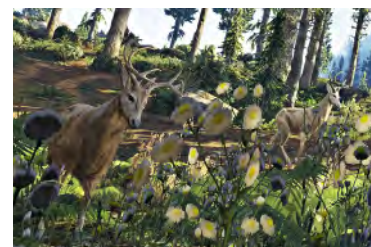
IT'S GOT A NEW VIEW

Rockstar has shoehorned a first-person shooter into *GTA V* for Xbox One and PS4, simply by adding a crim's-eye-view for all three playable characters. So whether you're raiding a bank, riding a motorbike, hunting sharks or just wandering around looking for people to punch for no reason, there's a whole new way to see the world.



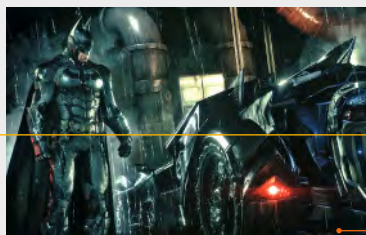
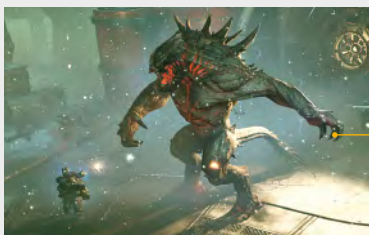
IT LOOKS LOADS BETTER

GTA V hasn't just combed its hair and squirted its armpits with Lynx to take its next-gen bow: the resolution has been bumped to 30fps 1080p (4K for PC next year), every texture has been replaced and the draw distance has been doubled, meaning those Blaine County vistas are now even more Instagrammable.



IT'S GOT NEW STUFF

If replaying the game from a different POV isn't enough for you, players returning to Los Santos will find new vehicles, plus new objectives such as a noir-ish murder mystery, a wildlife photography challenge and stock-car races. *GTA Online* progress can also be carried over by logging in to your existing Social Club account.



INCOMING

JANUARY

- SAINTS ROW 4: RE-ELECTED
- DYNASTY WARRIORS 8: LEGENDS
- DYING LIGHT

FEBRUARY

- EVOLVE
- THE ORDER: 1886
- THE WITCHER 3: WILD HUNT

JUNE

- BATMAN: ARKHAM KNIGHT

MB&F HM6 SPACE PIRATE

CHF215,000 / mbandf.com

It's a 1950s smartwatch!

Well, yes, it does exude something of a future-gazing '50s vibe, doesn't it? And it is a smart watch indeed, but it's not a smart watch. It exists solely for the eternally noble purpose of telling the time, not communicating with your common, pocket-dwelling phone. It was inspired by the spherical parts on the spaceship in the *Captain Future* comics that first appeared in the '40s.

Where are the hands?

This space pirate didn't lose his extremities in a sub-orbital skirmish: he never had them to begin with. Horological readings are taken from the lower domes, which show the time using two hemispherical indicators.

So it's an astronaut's watch, then?

NASA is unlikely to make it standard issue, though like all spaceships, it actually has radiation shields: the

central dome that houses the flying tourbillon is protected from UV radiation (it speeds up the oxidation of lubricating oils, as we're sure you already knew) by a retractable shield that's raised by a crown on the left side of the case. Meanwhile the twin spherical turbines up top, which regulate the winding system and the time indicators, are left out to look pretty full-time – radiation be damned.

What happened to the other five space pirates?

This is the first and, as far as we know, the only Space Pirate model to be made; however, there have been five Horological Machines (hence the HM6) before it. MB&F exists to push the boundaries of watches as art, taking over three years to develop this one alone. Only 100 HM6s will be made, and only 50 will have the impressive titanium exoskeleton you see here.



IT WAS INSPIRED
BY THE SPACESHIP
IN THE *CAPTAIN
FUTURE* COMICS
OF THE '40S

'Create your own world'
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Parrot SA - RCS Paris 394 149 496 - Parrot.com

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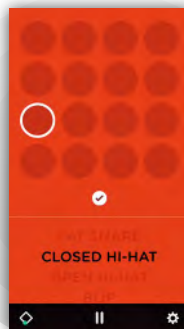
Free delivery

Bowers & Wilkins

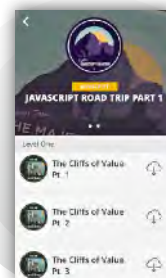
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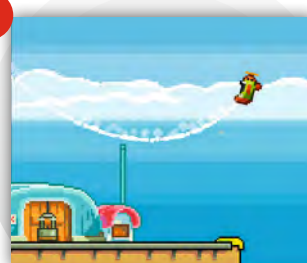
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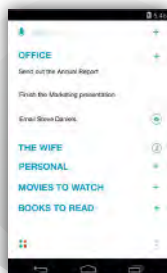
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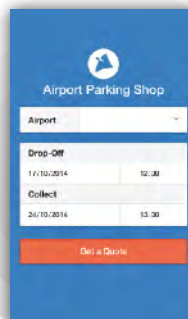
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9



1 The Sailor's Dream £2.99 / iOS

A calming new puzzler from Simogo, makers of some of the iPad's best games. Not as creepy as the award-winning *Year Walk* and not as confusing as the equally prize-festooned *Device 6*, it promises to be as brilliant as both.

2 CityMatchday £free / Android, iOS

On the face of it, Cit-eh's app is like any other club's, with news, stats and commentary, but it comes into its own within the Etihad Stadium. It gives fans access to video replays and a 'tactical cam'. Good job there's free Wi-Fi there, eh?

3 Any.do 2.0 from £free / Android, iOS

This well-established to-do list app has had a makeover, going big on collaborative features such as task invitations. The subscription for US\$27 adds location-based reminders, no size limits on file uploads and unlimited collaborators.

4 Keezy Drummer £free / iOS

A ludicrously easy drum machine that lets you build your own beats, then speed them up until they fit with your 'unusual Dominican trance' playlist. You can't save or export, but it's free and let's face it, you're not an electronic drums librarian.

5 Draw - Your Messaging Keyboard £free / Android

If, like us, you experience a range of emotions far more complex than the standard set of emojis, it's time to draw your own. Draw lets you doodle your feelings and send them to bemused friends and family.

6 Airport Parking Shop £free / Android, iOS

There are many hidden holiday costs, and parking is one of the most irksome. Compare the prices at 300 airport car parks across 30 UK airports so you can spend more on enjoying yourself and less on a square of tarmac for your motor.

7 Code School from £free / iOS

Killing time with your phone? With this app you could actually learn something. It has tutorial videos on coding in JavaScript, HTML, Ruby, iOS and more, with a number of free starter courses, then US\$29/month for more advanced courses.

8 Retry £free / Android, iOS

Chocks away! This 8-bit-style game is no overcomplicated flying sim. Touch the screen for lift-off, hold for too long and you'll loop. You'll spend ages retrying levels after sticking it into various bits of scenery, but it's still oddly relaxing.

9 Sellmyhome.co.uk £free / iOS

The average estate agent's fee for selling a property is a fist-clenching £4000. This service offers proper photos and floorplans, with the app co-ordinating viewings, enquiries and offers, for a considerably less rage-inducing £400.

APP SPOTLIGHT TIDAL

£free + £20/m / Android, iOS

Spotify and others have been doing the subscription model of music listening for ages, but there's room for more. Tidal delivers lossless FLAC-quality music to your blower. It's twice as much as Spotify, but if quality is important to you, it's worth it. There are treats such as HD music vids, and interviews plus offline play so you can get high-resolution tunes without splurging all your mobile data.



OUR MONTH

What the past 30 days have brought us by way of geekery

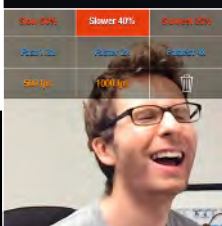


WHISKY MADE MY TEETH SING

And I only had one... in Johnnie Walker's new glass, which contains a tiny amp and 'exciter' that turns into a bone-conducting speaker, a little like the ones in Google Glass. Each sip brings an accompanying swig of warm, spicy music. Try it at the Freud bar, London.



Sophie Charara
reviewer /
musical dentist

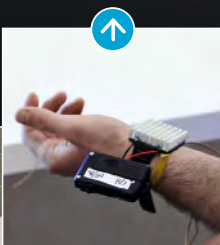


I SHOT A 960FPS VIDEO ON MY PHONE

...using an iPhone 6 and the SloPro app. Shoot a video at 240fps, import it into SloPro (it's free, or the Pro version is £2.49) and convert it to 25% speed. And there you have it: time that runs at one-sixteenth speed, like treacle.



Will Dunn
editor /
mmmm, treacle

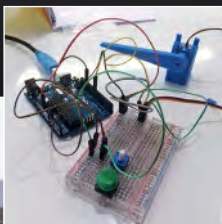


I TWEAKED MY OWN BODY HEAT

...with Wristify, a heating and cooling bracelet. I strapped on the Intel Edison-powered MIT invention and felt cool waves lower my °C in seconds. Like an ice lolly for my skin to slurp.



Fraser Macdonald
consulting editor /
hot mess



I QUANTIFIED IOS VS ANDROID

As part of Decoded's Data in a Day course, I built a Twitter sentiment analyser from an Arduino board and a servo. As it turns out, the social debate around the merits of these competing platforms isn't entirely reasonable — who knew?



Will Findlater
editor-in-chief /
sentiment
analyser-in-chief

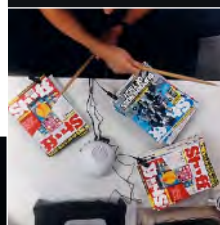


I MADE AN ELECTRIC GUITAR

Well, assembled one from a kit. The original Loog three-string mini-guitar was a Kickstarter smash, and the Electric Loog is here just in time for Christmas. You'll need a Phillips screwdriver, a free half-hour, and a child who won't cry too much when you hog this 'present' for yourself.

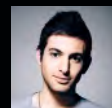


Richard Purvis
production editor /
Dadivarius



I MADE MUSIC WITH STUFF MAGAZINES

I hooked up the Korg Cliphit to a few copies of the world's greatest gadget magazine, chose the kit (classic rock), and found out just how rusty my drumming skills have got over the years. Proof: bit.ly/stuffdrums



Esat Dedezade
staff writer /
Thrill Collins

D3300

I AM SEIZING THE DAY



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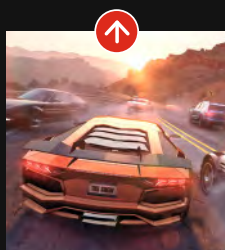
At the heart of the image





YOUR MONTH DEC

Winter need not be the season of discontent: here's chocolate, ale and fast cars



02

THE CREW

If you're a fan of driving games where you just put your foot down, Ubisoft's massively ambitious racer could be for you: its one huge map takes 40 minutes to drive from one side to the other. Perfect for when you've just driven the length of the M1 to see your parents.



12

THE HOBBIT: THE BATTLE OF THE FIVE ARMIES

Take a few bags of Revels for the inevitable three-hour runtime, but an evening of big-screen thrills spent in the company of Freeman, McKellen et al has become as Christmassy as *The Great Escape* and sprout farts.



13

THE CHOCOLATE FESTIVAL, LONDON

Did you know that Rowntree, Cadbury and Fry were all Quaker families, who encouraged the consumption of chocolate as an alternative to alcohol? Luckily, this two-day choc-fest is more about indulging than any boring history lessons.



13

THE REAL ALE TRAIN, LLANGOLLEN RAILWAY

Having done your Christmas shop via an app while waiting for a delayed train, you're free to skip over to Wales for a non-stressful steam train ride involving booze and food. Who cares if it's late?



26

EXODUS: GODS AND KINGS

Two-hour-plus CGI epic concerning Moses (Christian Bale) about which director Ridley Scott has remarked that being an atheist has been an advantage, forcing him to be objective about the plot. Chortle.



29

THE GUEST (BLU-RAY)

Whether you're a host or a guest over the festive period, this action-spooker will do just fine for putting a little unease throughout your yuletide co-habitees.

LG MUSICflow



SMART HI-FI AUDIO Wireless Multi-room

LG MUSICflow creates a whole new way to re-connect with your favourite music. Whether it's moving tracks from speaker to speaker, group playing or creating your very own home cinema, the LG MUSICflow provides endless possibilities. Simple to set up and easy to control thanks to LG's intuitive MUSICflow player app*, our range of speakers and soundbar will transform your audio experience.

www.lg.com/uk/musicflow



Live in
Flowing
Sound

*LG MUSICflow Player app is available on android, iOS and Windows PC only.

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Meet Cortana. She not only learns and remembers what you like, she can also provide reminders based on your location and contacts. All you have to do is ask.

Coming soon to other Lumia phones.



WIN

OUT
29 DEC
ON DEMAND,
BLU-RAY,
DVD

DAN STEVENS MAIKA MONROE

THE GUEST



WIN £1380 WORTH OF PHILIPS AUDIO TECH WITH THE GUEST

If that nice Dan Stevens chap from *Downton Abbey* turned up at your house claiming to be a friend of a recently deceased family member, you'd welcome him right in, wouldn't you? You'd get the kettle on and apologise for the un-stately condition of your carpets. And then, when the 'accidental' deaths started happening...

This is *The Guest*, a fun-filled action thriller that's out on DVD, Blu-ray and On Demand on 29 Dec. And it's the reason we're giving away a whole bunch of Philips audio gear to one lucky *Stuff* reader.

The prize includes the following: a Philips Fidelio E5 Surround-on-Demand home cinema speaker set (RRP £700); Philips Fidelio M2BT wireless Bluetooth headphones (£250); Philips Fidelio P9X wireless portable speaker (£200); Philips DTB855 micro system with CD, Bluetooth AptX streaming, USB charging, iPhone/iPad/iPod dock and 30W of power (£230); PLUS a bundle of 10 action DVDs including, of course, *The Guest*.

HOW TO ENTER

For a chance to win this £1380 package of home entertainment gadgetry, just go to **stuff.tv/win** and answer the following question:

WHAT WAS THE NAME OF DAN STEVENS' CHARACTER IN DOWNTON ABBEY?

- A** ... Matthew Crawley
- B** ... Matthew Creepey
- C** ... Matthew Bogeyface

Find out more at philips.co.uk

Terms & conditions 1 Open to UK residents aged 18 or over. 2 Entries close 11.59pm, 14 January 2015. 3 Prize is as stated. 4 Prizes are non-transferable. 5 Only one entry per person. 6 For full Haymarket terms & conditions see www.stuff.tv/legal Promoter: Haymarket Media Group, Teddington, Middx TW11 9BE

PHILIPS

HURRY!
COMPETITION
CLOSES
14 JANUARY
2015

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Stuff

18

CATEGORIES
JUDGED

166

GADGETS
NOMINATED

2014 GADGET AWARDS

THE TECH OF
THE YEAR

OVER
15,000
VOTES

5

CATEGORIES
READER
VOTED

After an
entire year of
reviews, comparisons,
arguments and thousands
of your votes, here it
is: the best Stuff
of 2014

Illustration
BenthiIllustrator.com
Photography
Pete Gardner

HIGHLY COMMEDED

OnePlus One

If someone offered you a top-end smartphone for just £230, you could be forgiven for worrying it'd be stuck in Bulgarian or made of chocolate. Not so the OnePlus One. The Moto X might've beaten it overall but the One has left its mark on 2014.



Smartphone of the Year

Motorola Moto X

For so long it looked like LG's G3 had this one sewn up. But much like the G2 last year, Moto came out of nowhere with the rip-snorting 5.2in Moto X and blew everything else away. After an under-the-radar stonker (the budget Moto G), Motorola ventured further down the alphabet and turned everything up to 10. A brilliant 1080p screen, overnight battery life, always-on voice control that actually works and some seriously nifty notification tricks make the Moto X stand out – and that's before you customise your own on the Moto Maker website. Some people think all Android phones are created equal, but the Moto X is proof that that's far from the truth.

£460 / motorola.co.uk

Shortlisted

LG G3 / HTC One M8 / Apple iPhone 6 /
OnePlus One / Samsung Galaxy Note 4 /
Motorola Moto G 4G / Sony Xperia Z3 Compact



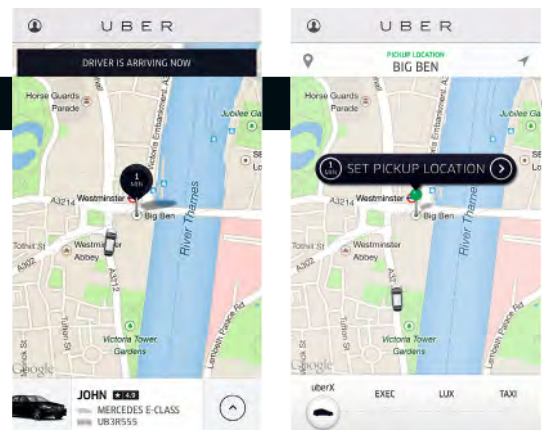
App of the Year

Uber

You know something's a cultural phenomenon when its name becomes colloquial. Tannoy did it, Walkman did it, and in London, Manchester, Barcelona and over 200 other cities, people don't get a taxi any more, they get an Uber. Just open the app, it'll use GPS to find you and there'll be a driver along any minute. It's cheap too. And with more places being added all the time, it means an end to aimless wandering of foreign streets looking for a taxi rank, or getting ripped off by 'tourist tax'. If only they could launch an Uber for bacon baps, we'd be at peak humanity.

£free / iOS, Android / uber.com

Shortlisted
Hyperlapse / Dice /
Dark Sky / Jinn /
Pixelmator /
Google Cardboard /
Appy Parking



System Camera of the Year

SONY A7R

This year, Sony achieved what camera manufacturers have been aiming at for over a decade: a compact system camera that's as good as a pro snapper. The A7R squeezes a full-frame, 36MP sensor into a palm-sized body, offering breathtaking image quality from something you can chuck (OK, place carefully) in a small bag. With a superb electronic viewfinder and autofocus as quick on the draw as a hyperactive cowboy, it's a joy to shoot with, and that massive sensor also turns light into silky-smooth 60fps 1080p movies. And if you'd rather keep it safely on a tripod, on-board Wi-Fi means it'll pair with your phone to act as a remote viewfinder and shutter release.

£1700 (body only) / sony.co.uk

Shortlisted

Olympus E-M10 / Sony A6000 / Panasonic Lumix GH4 / Canon EOS 7D MkII / Fujifilm X-T1 / Pentax K-3 / Nikon D750

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Panasonic Lumix GH4

Its headline feature is the ability to shoot 4K video – and it tramples all over the handful of similarly-skilled smartphones – but the excellent GH4 is much more than a one-trick horsey.



Cloud Service of the Year



Slack

Email is so ancient your inbox is probably haunted: spooked by the ghosts of forgotten attachments and typos you only notice as you hit 'send'. So isn't it time we found something new? Well *Stuff* found Slack – a hybrid of email and IM – and we really rather like it. Set up a team, add your friends or colleagues and you've got your own online forum – one with its own cloud storage for uploading files for other users to access, plus it plays nicely with Dropbox, IFTTT and Google+ Hangouts. We never want to send another email again.

£free / slack.com

Shortlisted

Spotify /
Netflix /
Ourscreen /
Now TV /
Qobuz

Tablet of the Year

Apple iPad Air 2

Having been left behind in the race for smartphone superiority, Apple is determined not to let its tablet crown topple – and the iPad Air 2 is a pretty good way of holding it up. The adjectives are the same: slimmer, lighter and, er, screenier, but as usual, the Air 2 is greater than the sum of its extremely lightweight parts. New screen tech means it's less reflective and easier to eyeball, making it better for everything from reading to movie-watching and editing, plus the addition of TouchID saves you seconds, which can be saved up over time and used to reply to Android fanboys on the internet. Here's a sample response: the best has just got better.

£400 / apple.com

Shortlisted

Samsung Galaxy Tab S 10.5 / Microsoft Surface Pro 3 / Tesco Hudl 2 / Nvidia Shield Tablet / Asus Transformer Book T100

HIGHLY COMMEDED

Tesco Hudl 2

Just because it's from Tesco doesn't mean the Hudl 2 is purely about value. With its Full HD, 8.3in screen and quad-core processor, it could easily have cost more than its £130 asking price. Unexpected item in the bagging area? Indeed.



Computer of the Year

Microsoft Surface Pro 3

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No! It's a tablet! Or it's a laptop. What is it? We're still not sure but it's called a Surface Pro 3. The first proper hybrid of its kind, it's got all the good bits of a laptop (power, keys and bigness) plus the best bits of a tablet (a decent touchscreen, portability and fun), and with hardly any of the bad bits of either (except perhaps the price). Microsoft might not be able to decide whether the Surface Pro 3 is a laptop or a tablet, but there's one thing we can all agree that it definitely is – and that's totally brilliant.

from £850 / microsoft.com

Shortlisted

Apple MacBook Air / Dell Chromebook 11 / Zotac ZBOX Sphere OI520 / Lenovo Yoga Pro 3 / Apple MacBook Pro Retina





Tech Toy of the Year

DJI Phantom 2 Vision

You used to need your own helicopter or a long ladder to have a go at aerial photography— but that was before quadcopters like the Phantom came along. It can shoot stills and HD video, but the bit that sets it apart is how simple it is to fly. It stabilises itself, hovers in place if you take your hands off the controls and can find its way back to where it took off using GPS. You can even use a phone to stream a drone's-eye view from the 14MP camera. You get better footage from its bigger, more expensive brother, but for an introduction to the joys of 300-foot-high photography (and something that turns more heads in the park than a kickabout with Messi), it can't be beaten.

£550 / dji.com

Shortlisted

Sphero Ollie / Parrot Jumping Sumo / Anki Drive / BMW C Evolution Scooter / Korg Clip Hit



Drive of the Year

BMW i8

If Batman had been German, not only would he be called Fledermausmensch, he'd also drive a BMW i8 – not that gas-guzzling gun-tractor Bruce Wayne trundles around Gotham in. Why? Well, just think of the national stereotype it fulfils. Thanks to its hybrid power, the i8 is ruthlessly efficient in propelling itself to a top speed of 160mph, plus it's exactly what an eco-friendly Dark Knight would buy. There are certainly greener motors out there, but none combine the sheer driving thrill of a supercar with the appetite of a family saloon.

£99,850 / bmw.co.uk

Shortlisted

Citroen Cactus / Volvo XC90 / Tesla Model S / Volkswagen XL1 / Volkswagen Golf GTE

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Hands Free Calling
Built-in microphone
for hands free calling



Bluetooth
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directly from your device



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Music in every
direction



Built in Battery
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Pioneer

TV Gadget of the Year

Google Chromecast

Google's Chromecast is to your telly what a banana is to Eric Wimp of 29 Acacia Road. Insert Google's streaming stick into your idiot lantern's HDMI hole and it'll be transformed into a televisual superhero, capable of tremendous feats such as receiving Netflix, BT Sport, Now TV and more from your phone, tablet or laptop so your favourite movies and TV shows can escape the evil clutches of Dr Squinty Screen. It'll even let you send your current Chrome tab to the telly or mirror any Android's screen. With great power comes great responsibility – but this time not great cost. At £30, it's the kind of gadget you can almost pick up alongside your weekly groceries. Affordable, effective and essential.

£30 / google.co.uk/chromecast

Shortlisted

BT YouView+ / Sky+ / Sony BDV-N5200W /
Yamaha YSP-2500 / Canton DM 75 / Roku 3



2014'S TOP TV SHOWS

True Detective

Matthew McConaughey shines alongside the Louisiana countryside in this slow-paced occult murder mystery.

Toast Of London

Matt Berry brings back Stephen Toast for more bizarre acting jobs, blow football competitions and "yes, I can hear you Clem Fandango's".

The Americans

In the very first episode, two characters do the nasty in a car to *In The Air Tonight* after disposing of a body. What's not to like?

TV of the Year

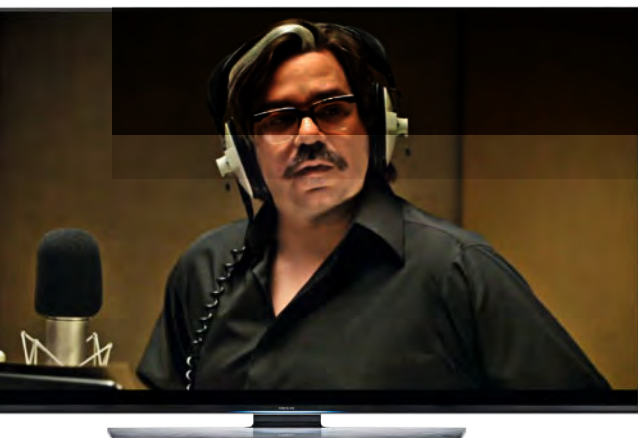
Samsung UE55HU7500

While our phones have been Mensa-bothering *Mastermind* champs for years, it's taken our TVs some time to wise up. But hung on the wall reciting Shakespeare soliloquies and doing some really hard sums is Samsung's UE55HU7500: a handsome, high-performance 4K flatscreen that learns what you like to watch, so there's no hiding your penchant for *Lizard Lick Towing*. Sporting more holes than a golf course with a mole problem, this telly offers affordable 4K plus plenty of stuff to watch until the catalogue catches up.

from £1700 / samsung.com

Shortlisted

Samsung
UE48H6400 / Sony
KDL-40W605B / LG
42LB700V / Sony
KDL-32W706B /
Sony KD-65S9005B



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It's late at night and we find the villain up to no good in the computer suite of his college!

With this I can take the software and student's course work from these computers that I need, then just wipe the hard drive and no one will know it was me!



I'm sick of being told that I am lazy and good for nothing, this'll shut them all up!

That's one way of getting better grades!



The next day as planned the result is complete chaos and panic!!

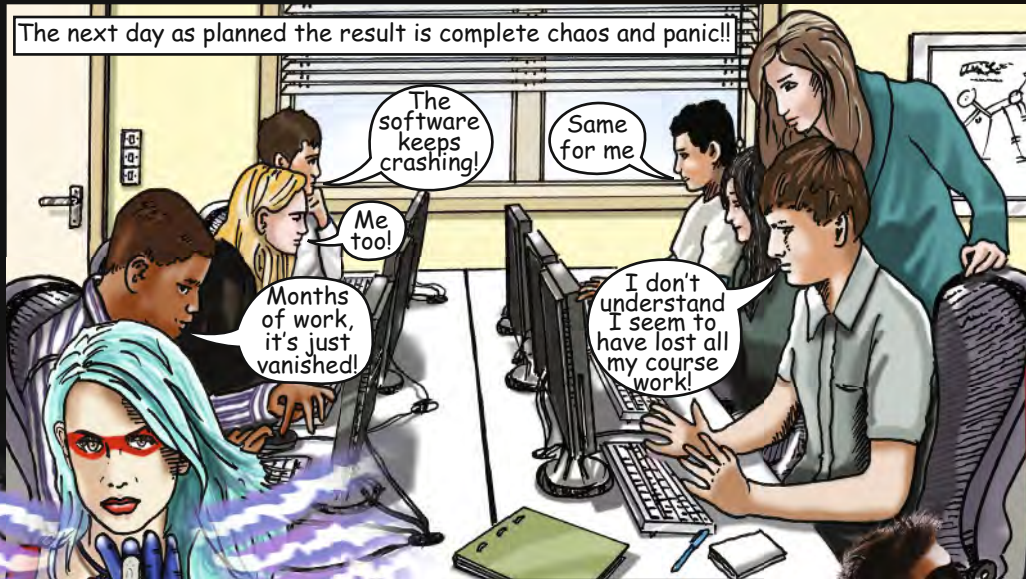
The software keeps crashing!

Same for me

Me too!

Months of work, it's just vanished!

I don't understand I seem to have lost all my course work!



Now I can return all those files

LINDY USB PORT BLOCKERS

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WHERE TIME BEGINS



THE FINAL SEASON
PART 1

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Health & Fitness Gadget of the Year

Jawbone UP24

Without the willpower to use them, fitness gadgets are about as useful as those unworn running shoes hiding under the bed. The beauty of Jawbone's Bluetooth-equipped UP24 is that you don't really need any willpower to use it: you just put it on and it gradually makes you feel guilty about not doing enough exercise. It's essentially a willpower generator. Seeing how lazy you are turned into numbers, graphs and cold, hard facts on your phone screen will do that. Luckily it alerts you to help you towards your daily goals, plus it'll work with apps such as MyFitnessPal, Runkeeper and Withings. Oh, and it's compatible with those trainers too. Just pair them with your legs.

£95 / jawbone.com

Shortlisted

TomTom Multi-Sport / Runner Cardio /
Game Golf / Polar M400 / Jabra Pulse



Reader-voted

Kickstart of the Year

Scio

Ask a biologist what superpower they'd like and nine times out of ten they'll say they want to be able to see the chemical make-up of food, plants and all kinds of other stuff. The other time they'll say they want to shoot lasers out their eyes. Scio can help with the former. Having sailed through its \$200,000 target on the way to raising US\$2.7m, this keyring-sized spectrometer scans items and sends their vital stats to your smartphone wirelessly, so you'll never eat a sausage without knowing exactly what's in it again. Hmm, on second thoughts...

US\$250 / consumerphysics.com

Shortlisted
Brewbot / Earin /
Ninja Sphere /
Pono / Sam Labs /
Superhot /
The Micro



Scio 27%

Others

Hi-Fi Gadget of the Year

Naim Mu-so

It might look a bit like somebody pushed over a robot's gravestone but Naim's Mu-so does anything but mark the death of hi-fi. Fundamentally it's a wireless speaker, but it's one with its sights set on audiophile excellence packed into one box. The Mu-so can stream anything over Bluetooth, AirPlay, Spotify Connect, or from a NAS or computer via UPnP, plus there's hi-res audio support if you go wired. It sounds incredible and, with its heavy duty heat sink and sci-fi-inspired control dial, looks like it was made in the same astral forge as the monolith in Kubrick's *2001*. It might not change the trajectory of the human race, but it's changed how we feel about one-box hi-fi, and that'll do.

£895 / naimaudio.com

Shortlisted

Q Acoustics BT3 / Bluesound / Cambridge Audio Minx Xi / Cambridge Audio Go / Monitor Audio Airstream S200 / Audio Pro Addon T10 / Sony NWZ-ZX1

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Bluesound

After years of multi-room dominance from Sonos, there's a new kid on the block. With its cleverly designed app, Bluesound is a streamer for the future.



Headphones of the Year

Sony MDR EX650AP

While they're technically made of brass, the goldish hue of Sony's EX650s is rather apt for the year's podium-topping headphones. Thankfully the brass construction doesn't restrict your choice of tunes to *Now That's What I Call Trumpeting* but it does provide a weighty home for the 12mm drivers, which pump equally weighty sound into your ears. A brilliant tonal balance, an expansive soundstage and a phone-friendly remote make these buds the ultimate upgrades, plus they're more comfortable than a litter of puppies in a onesie.

£60 / sony.co.uk

Shortlisted

SoundMagic E10S / AKG Y50 / Philips Fidelio M1 MKII / Bose QuietComfort 25 / Philips Fidelio M2BT





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Reader-voted

Game of the Year

Alien: Isolation

With many first-person shooters now little more than fish-in-a-barrel sims, it's refreshing to play a game with a much deeper barrel. Oh, and a xenomorphic fish that has a nasty habit of sneaking up on you and turning your internal organs into external ones. *Alien: Isolation* is the gaming equivalent of walking blindfolded across a tightrope over a pool of gnashing piranhas — the danger might not always be visible, but you know it's just under the surface. Extra-terrestrial stand-offs and unforgiving gameplay mean it's not for everyone, but for its truly terrifying atmosphere, one of the greatest inventions of sci-fi cinema finally has a game worthy of the *Alien* name.

PS4, Xbox One / alienisolation.com

Shortlisted

Destiny / FIFA 15 / Forza Horizon 2 / Watch_Dogs / Titanfall / Mario Kart 8 / Dark Souls II / Wolfenstein: The New Order / South Park: The Stick Of Truth

Isolation
54%

Others



Mobile Game of the Year

Monument Valley

If you like aimlessly moving coloured blobs around your screen it's unlikely the brief but brilliant experience of *Monument Valley* will interest you, but in a world that's normally about little more than tapping players for cash, this Escher-esque puzzler stands out like a perspective-warped thumb. Conquer its optical illusions and guide the princess to the end of each level for one of the most memorable mobile gaming experiences in years. It's not exactly difficult but sometimes it's the journey rather than the destination that makes a trip worthwhile.

£2.49 / iOS, Android / monumentvalleygame.com

Shortlisted

Bioshock iOS / The Nightmare Cooperative / Eliss Infinity / Hitman GO / Threes! / The Room 2 / The Walking Dead Season 2

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“It has a long list of streaming features that seems incredible for its £200 price tag, while the large-scale and subtly dynamic sound is even more impressive considering its small footprint.”

WHAT HI-FI? MAGAZINE, OCTOBER 2014



ROOM FILLING

AWARD WINNING

AKG
by HARMAN



meet the new
Y50

WHAT HI-FI?
AWARDS 2014

PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

On-ear headphones

Best portable on-ear headphones up to £100

AKG Y50



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Channeling 65 years of AKG expertise, the Y50 delivers pure studio sound. Sound that frees your imagination. Sound that unlocks your creativity. Sound that inspires. **Find out more on AKG.com**

Compact Camera of the Year

Sony Cyber-Shot
RX100 III

If smartphones killed the compact camera then Sony never got the memo, because the RX100 III is the finest pocketable snapper we've ever seen. It doesn't come cheap – but that's because the raw materials it's been built with aren't exactly from the bargain bin. The lens is nice and wide, it feels sturdy and solid in the hand, and the 1in, 20MP sensor is big enough to handle low-light situations far more capably than any phone. And all in a package that actually takes up less pocket than some of the latest gigantaphones.

£550 / sony.co.uk

Shortlisted

Sony DSC-HX60 / Nikon Coolpix AW120 / Canon G1 X Mk2 / Nikon Coolpix S6700 / Canon Powershot G16 / Panasonic TZ60 / Fujifilm X30



Reader-voted

Innovation of the Year

Google Project Ara

You might not be able to buy yourself one of Google's DIY mobiles just yet but that hasn't stopped you crowning it your favourite innovation of 2014. Using 3D-printed modular parts, Project Ara allows you to build the phone you want rather than the one the manufacturer wants you to have. You pick the size of the chassis and then fill the slots on the back with your desired features. That could mean a 4K screen, a huge battery and even a blood sugar monitor – and, crucially, an end to the identikit black rectangles we choose from now.

[ftba / projectara.com](http://ftba/projectara.com)

Shortlisted
Dolby Atmos /
Dyson 360
Eye / Sony
PlayStation TV /
Vrase / Lytro Illum



Ara 27%

Others

Smartwatch of the Year

Motorola Moto 360

Ever since the Babylonians used the sundial to work out whether they were late for the afternoon battle with the Elamites, we've been using circles to tell the time. These days the only battles we face are against PPI calls and wasps in the pub garden but our favourite timekeepers are still the same shape (if a little easier to strap to your wrist). Oh, and they do a lot more too. The Moto 360 was the first smartwatch to marry form with function, without looking like a prop from a '90s sci-fi movie. So it's a little chunky for some tastes and the battery life could be better, but the 360 was the first Android Wear smartwatch we didn't want to take off, like, ever.

£200 / motorola.co.uk

Shortlisted

Samsung Gear Live / Pebble Steel /
LG G Watch R / Martian Notifier

2014'S TOP TWITTER ACCOUNTS

@DrunkFurniture

It's just pictures of discarded furniture with drunken rambling pasted over the top. We're not sure why it's funny, but it is.

@GalacticKeegan

What would happen to Kevin Keegan if he had to set up a new human colony in outer space? Find out all the answers in this peerless account.

@AmznMovieRevws

One man trawls Amazon for its funniest, most bizarre user reviews. Conclusive proof that the customer isn't always right.



i8 28%

Others

Reader-voted

Design of the Year

BMW i8

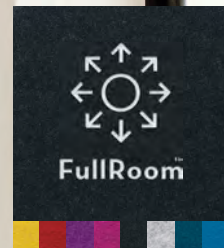
It's very rare for a concept car to make it to production without all the interesting bits getting hacked off, but BMW's designers were obviously so taken by their efforts that the differences between 2009's Vision EfficientDynamics prototype and the i8 are remarkably hard to spot. And who can blame them? Whether it's the scissor doors, the rear cutaways or the way its instruments turn red when you put it into sport mode, the i8 is a car designed for the future that exists today. And all with the (almost) guilt-free emissions of a boring five-seater. £99,850 / bmw.co.uk

Shortlisted

Apple Watch /
HTC One M8 /
Motorola Moto 360 /
Ninja Sphere /
Samsung Galaxy Note Edge /
Volkswagen XL1



FULL ROOM, FULL SOUND, FULL OF JOY



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Whether you are at home or away, the Libratone ZIPP is the portable speaker with up to 8 hours battery time, that enables you to take the spirit of Christmas anywhere and everywhere.

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Colour up with a free cover!

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NEW

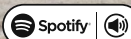
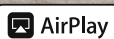
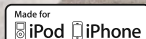
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Gadget of the Year

Microsoft Surface Pro 3

In a year of five-star phone after five-star phone, we found ourselves looking elsewhere for 2014's most important gadget. Sure, the Moto X and LG G3 are incredible, do-everything-but-make-your-bed mobiles, but they didn't break as much new ground as the Pro 3 – a tablet that could make your laptop extinct. Its powerful Intel Haswell chip offers more power than any tablet while doubling its battery life, its form is (quite literally) more flexible than a MacBook Air and it has a keyboard cover that's actually a pleasure to use. With Google and Apple working to catch up on 'tablets for work', the Pro 3's combo of innovation and practicality make it a worthy Gadget of the Year.

from £850 / microsoft.com

Shortlisted

Microsoft Xbox One / Sony PlayStation 4 / Apple iPhone 6 / Motorola Moto X / Samsung Galaxy Note 4 / Motorola Moto 360 / BMW i8 / DJI Phantom 2 Vision / Google Chromecast / Sony A7R / OnePlus One



Reader-voted

Readers' Gadget of the Year

OnePlus One

From encouraging people to smash up their phones to requiring an invitation to buy one, OnePlus grabbed plenty of headlines in 2014. But by undercutting its more established competitors by around 50% and still producing one of the best phones of the year, this Chinese upstart is nailing the important stuff too. When the pre-orders opened, the servers melted like a snowman eating jalapeños, and in a world where Google's own phones are no longer the wallet-watcher's choice, the OnePlus One can stake a decent claim as the new Nexus.

£230 / oneplus.net

Shortlisted
Apple iMac with Retina 5K; iPhone 6 / BMW i8 / Google Chromecast / LG G3 / Microsoft Surface Pro 3; Xbox One / Motorola Moto 360; Moto X / Samsung Galaxy Note 4 / Sony A7R; PS4



OnePlus
78%

Others

Stream and shout

Amazon's gunning for Apple again with the Fire TV streaming box. Will its extra gaming and app smarts inch it ahead?

£80 / amazon.co.uk

Not content with following Apple in producing its own tablet and smartphone, Amazon has gone three for three by launching the Fire TV: a tiny black box that lets you stream video, photos and music to your telly. Does this remind you of anything?

But despite costing the same as the Apple TV, the Fire TV does set its sights higher: it's a games console too, says Amazon, and thanks to its wide support for apps, it doesn't force you into buying things only from its own maker.

Do these claims bear out? Has Amazon just made the Apple TV obsolete? Let's take a closer look at the Fire TV to find out...

1 Minimalist structure

The Fire TV is a sturdy, compact plastic square, a little wider and flatter than the Apple TV. Only a moulded Amazon logo and a tiny power indicator light break up its minimalistic look. It's a neat little device that easily fits under or behind a TV so it's unlikely to ruin the aesthetics of any living room.

2 Simplicity personified

With few connections and options, setting up the Fire TV takes a matter of minutes. Plug it into your telly, connect it to your Wi-Fi, log in with your Amazon account and then you're good to go, with your favourite titles already on your homescreen. There's even an idiot-proof introductory video that gives a swift overview.

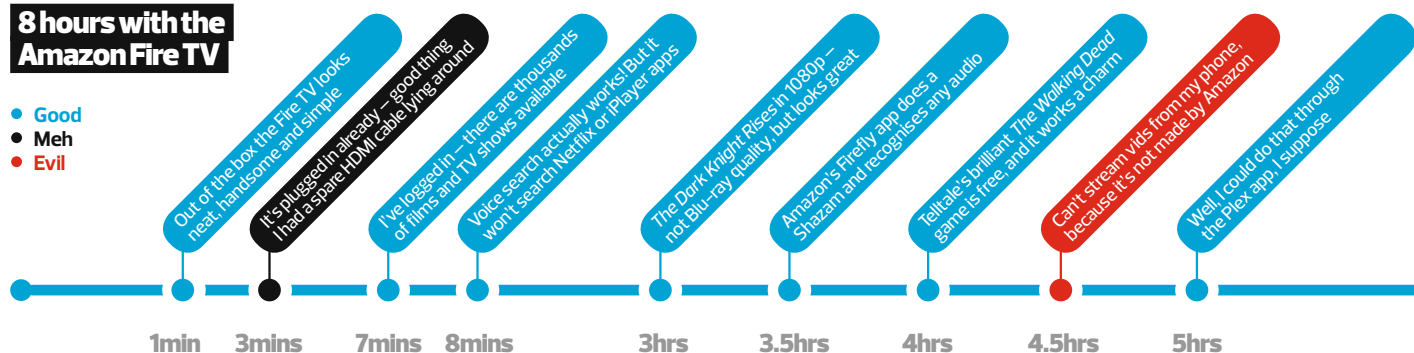
3 Prime directive

The Fire TV is ideal for Amazon Prime subscribers, as it puts the service's streaming video content front and centre. And very nice it looks, too. But thanks to support for other services like Netflix and BBC iPlayer, as well as one-off rentals and purchases of non-Prime films and TV shows, it could appeal to non-Primers.



8 hours with the Amazon Fire TV

- Good
- Meh
- Evil



4 Music box

Store MP3s using a cloud-based Amazon Music locker? Then you can stream them through the Fire TV. But as with video, apps mean you can access music from other sources, such as Spotify Connect. An optical output even lets you connect the box to a proper hi-fi.

5 Console yourself

While it won't have the PS4 running scared, the Fire TV also runs games. You'll need to shell out £35 for a control pad in order to play the best of them, but the box's quad-core chip and 2GB of RAM mean it can handle the same sort of stuff as a high-end tablet.



3



Tech specs

Video output 1080p or 720p at up to 60fps
Processor Qualcomm Snapdragon 8064
Memory 2GB **Storage** 8GB
Connectivity HDMI, optical audio, Ethernet, USB 2.0, Bluetooth 2.1 (for remote)
Dimensions 115x115x17.5mm
Weight 281g

Peripheral vision

The extra bits and pieces that make your Amazon Fire TV smokin' hot



Gamepad

This £35 wireless pad is surprisingly sturdy and comfortable to hold – a bit like a rumble-free Xbox 360 controller. It's a requirement for playing most of the Fire TV's action games.



Remote control

This simple clicker works just fine, but its greatest trick is voice search: hit a button, speak and the Fire TV brings up a relevant list. Sadly, it won't search third-party apps – not yet anyway.



External storage?

One thing you won't be doing is boosting the 8GB of built-in storage – because the USB port doesn't support external drives. And there's only 5GB free after accounting for Amazon's OS.



Kindle Fire or Fire Phone

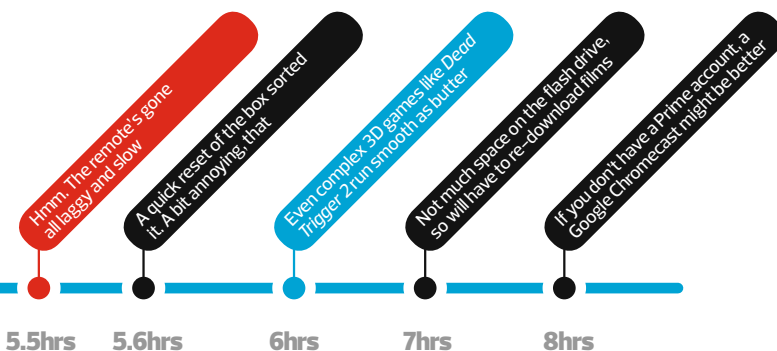
Own an Amazon phone or tablet? Then you can use it as an info-packed second screen while watching Prime vids, or mirror its screen on your telly through the Fire TV.



It might look like an Apple TV rip-off, but this is an altogether smarter breed of streamer. Its power, voice search, support for third-party content and passable impression of a games console nudge it ahead of the competition. Only the small storage and some reliability issues hold it back from full marks. @samkielsden

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★

Powerful, user-friendly and flexible: Amazon has staked a spot among the streaming elite



App:roved

FOR
FAMILY
FEUDS

Christmas Radio

Whenever a bunch of people get together, particularly families, everyone's varied and personal taste in music is likely to make them come to blows. So when your mum's insisting on Bublé, your brother wants a bit of Bing Crosby and you just want an end to January sofa ads, set fire to Spotify for National Turkey Day and go truly festive with Christmas Radio. It only plays music from stations that have Santa, sleigh bells, carols and snowmen on the brain.

Stuff says ★★☆☆☆
Efree / Android, iOS

FOR
TIME
TRAVEL

Helix

Helix is one of those games that smashes old into new with exciting results. In this pulsating old-school-style title, you fend off infinite enemies with the sole power of a dextrous digit. Given that Helix is chock-full of oddball pixelated characters in searing neon, you'd be forgiven for thinking you'd somehow catapulted back to 1982. But the controls are straight out of touchscreen heaven, making for a modern-day arcade classic.

Stuff says ★★★★★
£1.99 / iOS

FOR
CREATIVE
PICS

Pixelmator

If you still think tablets are consumption-only devices, try Pixelmator, hailed as 'Photoshop for iPads'. Although it's certainly not as complex as Adobe's pro application, it could be the only image editor you need. The more you work with it, the more impressive it becomes. A truly stunning achievement – although there are minor bumps, so we wouldn't recommend it on anything less powerful than an iPad 4 or iPad Mini 2.

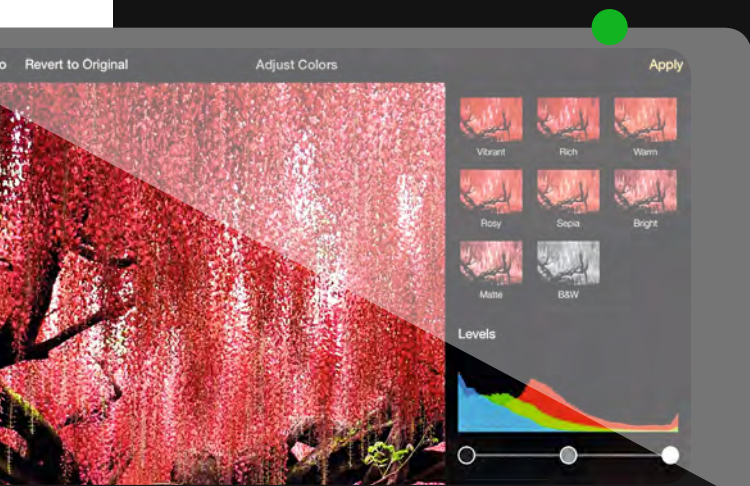
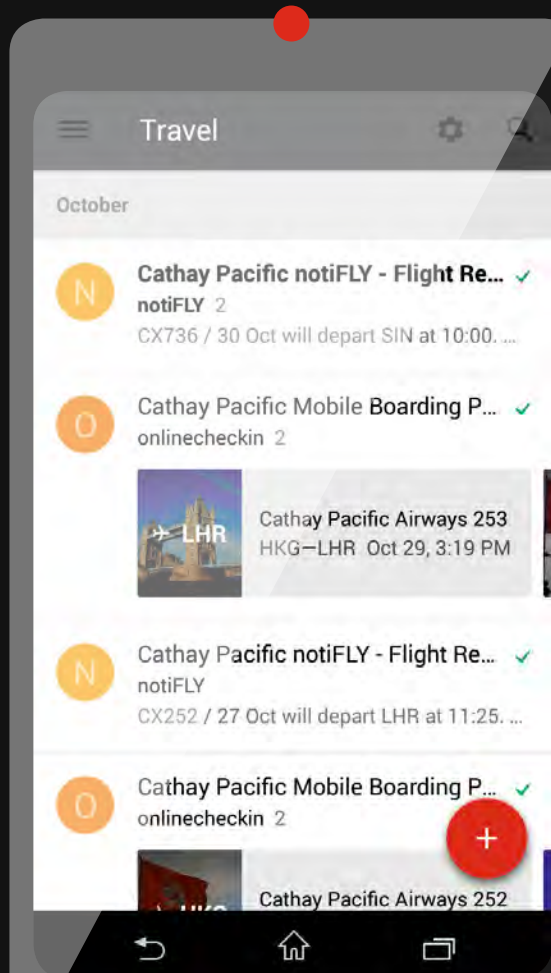
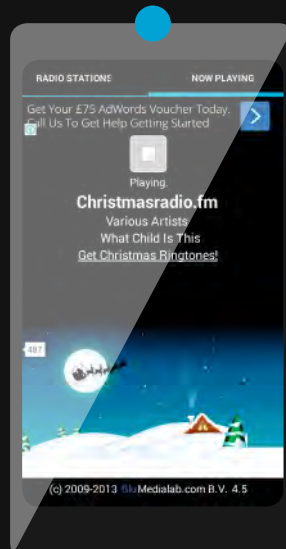
Stuff says ★★★★★
£2.99 / iOS (iPad)

FOR
BUSY
BEES

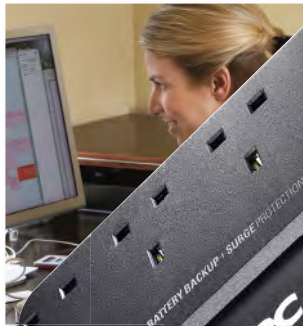
Google Inbox

Google's new email and organiser combines the powers of a to-do list with your inbox. Messages can be swiped to archive or marked as done, while emails that require you to act can be snoozed or left at the top, reminding you to take action. Coupled with slick animations and Google's new material design, it looks sleek and sexy too. Not one for compulsive deleters, mind, as you can't swipe messages to erase them any more.

Stuff says ★★★★★
Efree / Android, iOS



With APC Back-UPS, your digital life goes on...



even when the power goes off

Preserve what's most important to you

Reliable power backup for 24/7 availability

Whether DVRing your favorite show, updating your Facebook status, or playing a live network game, you depend on your home electronics every day, all day. That's why APC by Schneider Electric™ has designed battery backup solutions that protect the constant availability and connectivity you expect... and depend on.

Peace-of-mind protection on two levels

When the power goes out, our popular Back-UPS™ units go to work. They instantly switch your home technologies to emergency power, allowing you to work through brief power outages or safely shut down your systems so you won't lose valuable files — such as digital photos and media libraries. They also feature surge outlets to guard your electronics and data from 'dirty' power and damaging power surges — even lightning. So you get two levels of protection in every APC Back-UPS unit!

Energy-saving insurance for what matters most

Our Back-UPS units protect your home office, digital living and home media applications, notebook computers, DVRs, and gaming application. And since we now offer energy-efficient models that reduce electricity costs through unique power-saving outlets, you can realize true energy savings regardless of the applications you're backing up. Throughout your home, the APC Back-UPS is the cost-saving insurance you need to stay up and running and reliably safeguarded from both unpredictable power and wasteful energy drains.

 Keep your electronics up and your energy use down!

ES Series

The ever-popular ES models are priced affordably yet provide enough extended runtime to allow you to work through short and medium power outages. Some power-saving models have been designed to actively reduce energy costs.

The energy-efficient ES Series

The new ES boasts innovative power-saving outlets, which automatically shut off power to unused devices when your electronics are turned off or asleep, eliminating wasteful electricity drains.

BE 700G-UK

- 8 outlets
- 405 watts/700 VA
- Up to 80 minutes runtime
- Telephone/network protection

BE 550G-UK

- 8 outlets
- 330 watts/550 VA
- Up to 55 minutes runtime
- Telephone/network protection



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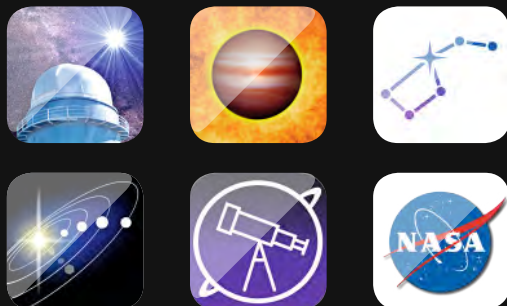


● Mobile Observatory

This Android app isn't pretty, but it's certainly heavenly for stats wonks and astronomy geeks. Boasting similar (if less pleasing) sky views to Star Walk, it also includes exhaustive lists of objects and upcoming celestial events, a top-down solar system view, and a handy 'tonight's best' section

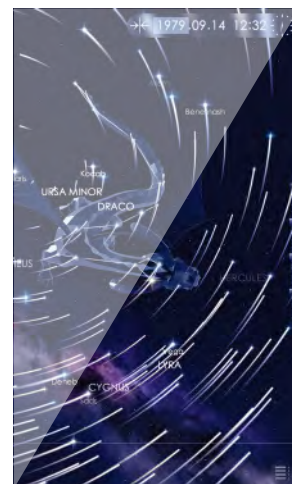
Stuff says ★★★★★
£3.95 / Android

Mini meme



STAR GAZING

Twin the magic of technology with the majesty of the heavens, using apps to discover and learn more about stars, planets, comets, satellites and galaxies far, far away...



● Star Walk series

Star Walk combines a beautiful, browsable representation of the heavens with an augmented reality view that overlays digital information onto the night sky. Jam-packed with facts, the original app exists for Windows Phone and Android, and a more ethereal sequel is out for iOS, along with a version for kids.

Stuff says ★★★★★
from £1.79 / iOS, Android, Windows Phone



● Solar Walk

Solar Walk is a fully interactive 3D solar system model. Beautifully tactile, you can use pinch and drag gestures to effortlessly zoom and spin celestial bodies. There's a fun 3D mode too, and each planet has a detailed information page with photos, statistics and a glimpse at its internal structure.

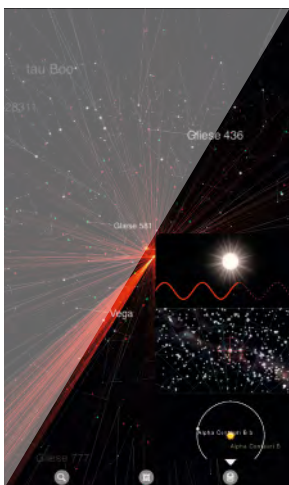
Stuff says ★★★★★
from £1.89 / iOS, Android



● Pocket Universe

It's less elegant than Star Walk, but Pocket Universe's features make it a worthwhile download for iOS-based stargazers. There are lists of nightly and monthly highlights, intriguing virtual Mars and Moon-walks, and a star map voiceover, for when you've attached your device to a telescope and need to know what you're looking at.

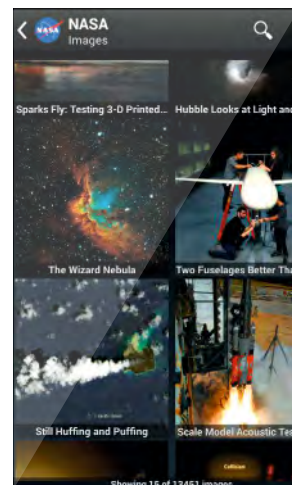
Stuff says ★★★★★
£1.99 / iOS



● Exoplanet

If you stare into space and dream of other planets rather than stars, Exoplanet is a must. Its database lists known exoplanets, and correlation diagrams can be created based on user-selected criteria. The best bit is the Milky Way map, which enables you to explore where these planets are in relation to Earth.

Stuff says ★★★★★
£free / iOS



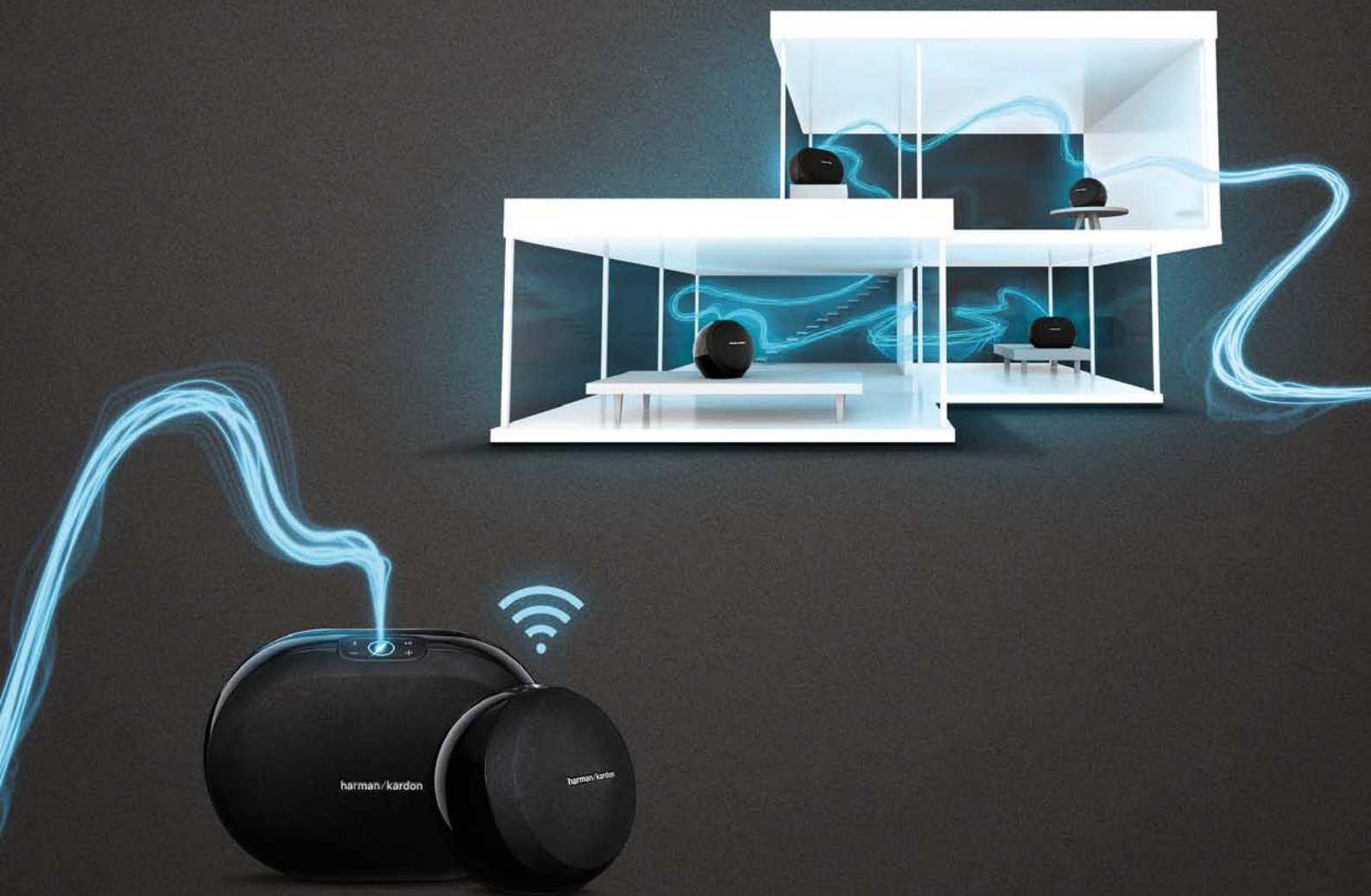
● NASA

No round-up of apps for stargazers would be complete without NASA's. The interface is pretty clunky, but that's forgotten when you're delving into the wealth of information on NASA missions, or browsing the huge collection of beautiful images and engaging videos that help you learn more about the universe we live in.

Stuff says ★★★★★
£free / iOS, Android

All your music in all your rooms, wirelessly.

High definition sound, simple setup,
and wireless with the touch of a button.



harmankardon.com/wireless

harman/kardon
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PLAY LINK

BY **Lenco**



MORE THAN A MULTIRoom HiFi SYSTEM

Easy to set up and user friendly, PlayLink lets you enjoy your music like never before via one app compatible with iOS or Android. Choose a tune for one room, play the same music in several rooms, or stream it throughout your home. Simple, powerful, and impressive sound. PlayLink is the essential sound system for the connected homes of tomorrow and can interact with other AllPlay™ devices in your house.

Music heaven on earth. Stream all the music in the world, where and when you want. From your music gallery, internet radios and all available streaming services (music service availability varies by region). Millions of songs are at your fingertips - jazz, rock, pop, and your favourite artists – all within your control. Playconnect, PlayLink-4 and PlayLink-6 are designed for high-resolution 'lossless' audio files (up to 24-bit and 192KHZ).



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ART TECHO

Art galleries and museums used to be silent halls full of dusty glass cabinets, but no more: **Mark Wilson** savours the world's best techs-hibitions

📅 until August 2015

📍 The National Museum of Science and Technology, Stockholm, Sweden

■ Petting Zoo

Visiting zoos once meant feeding hay to a friendly goat. These days, it involves hanging out with suspended robotic arms that use real-time camera tracking to respond to your petting and slowly develop their own personalities. All very good for robo-human relations, but we'd recommend standing elsewhere when Skynet gains consciousness.

minimaforms.com

THE TECHSPERIMENTERS

Familiar gadget faces served with a creative, interactive twist

The Cube's four Kinects can read the movements of three people on each side. In theory, give it a fighting sim and you've got a virtual *Royal Rumble*. Or the fight scene from 2005 sci-fi flick *The Island*.



permanent

Microsoft Visitor Center, Washington, USA

Microsoft Cube

So, Microsoft's invented a *Minecraft* portal? Not quite yet. Instead, the Cube is a "canvas for a new kind of creative expression" (according to Microsoft's senior director of brand strategy, Michael Megalli) or, in this case, a next-gen version of *Dance Central*. A four-foot-square box containing five projectors and four inter-connected Kinects, it lets jiggling people on each side see their own and each other's moves depicted by virtual cubes and ribbons. That might sound pretty much like an LSD simulator, but Microsoft has big plans for the idea, including making giant Cubes that talk to each other. In the meantime, get twerking... microsoft.com

Effektorium

Mendelssohn-Bartholdy Museum, Leipzig, Germany

This ingenious installation uses the Leap Motion gesture controller to let you conduct a virtual orchestra. The tempo and instruments respond to the (suitably exaggerated) flicks of your baton, while the touchscreen guides you through Beethoven's Symphony No.5.

mendelssohn-stiftung.de



Drone Aviary

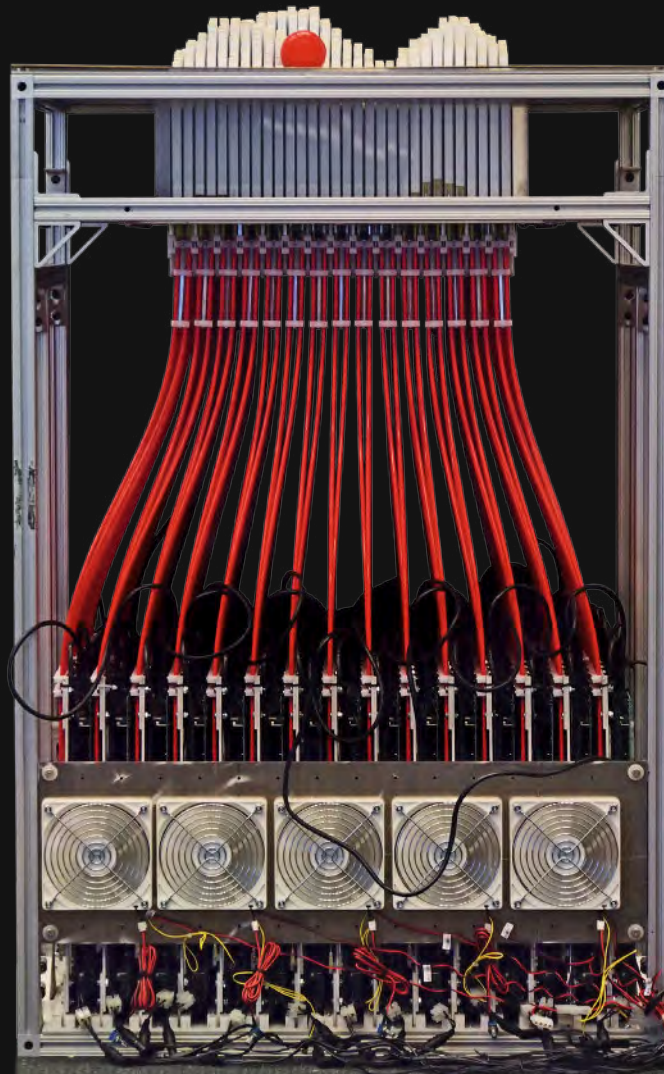
April 2015
V&A Museum, London, UK

Become a futuristic Alan Partridge by exclaiming "I know a cracking drone aviary" and taking your better half to this exhibition. Details about the indoor drone-fest are vague at the moment, but it will involve 'interactivity' and probably a faint whirring sound.

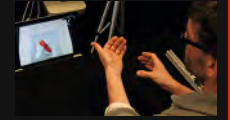
superflux.in



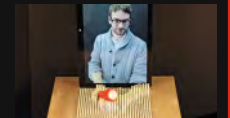
[Pictures Microsoft, Owen Richards]

**HOW IT WORKS**

1 A person stands in front of a Kinect motion sensor and a screen displaying the inFORM table. The table is essentially a three-dimensional, low-res display.



2 These movements are relayed to the table, prompting its 900 pins (each with their own micro-controller and circuit board) to mirror the shapes being made by the remote user.



3 A projector above the table adds colour and highlights depth. This added texture means it could ultimately be used for making shape-shifting UIs or CAD modelling.

THE FUTURISTS

from 12 December 2014

Cooper Hewitt Design Museum, New York, USA

Future artefacts show us VR, wearables and telepresence...

○ Body Metrics

📍 The Tech Museum of Innovation, San Jose, USA

Think your fitness band knows you? Wait until you step inside this, which kits you out with a mind-reading NeuroSky EEG headset and stress-tracking sensors to record your emotions. Go to the 'Data Pool' at the end for a full report of your visit. Well, it beats a gift shop.

thetech.org



○ The Machine To Be Another

📍 touring, venues tbc

This project's 'Gender Swap' sees two people don Oculus Rifts with attached cameras. Each person's view is then piped to other person which, when combined with agreed set movements, creates a convincing body-swapping illusion. The wider project will be touring festivals next year.

themachinetobeanother.org



● inFORM

Heading to the Big Apple this Christmas and want to see the future of Skype? Pop in to see this 'dynamic shape display' at the Cooper Hewitt Design Museum. It's a marvel of telepresence, allowing a remote user to manipulate objects on the other side of the world in real-time. The project's inventors, from MIT's Tangible Media Group, see it as a step towards moving from old-school graphical user interfaces to the tactile user interface and a world of 'radical atoms'. This would see the likes of inFORM combine with new materials that can change their form and appearance as easily as pixels.

tangible.media.mit.edu



THE BIG KIDS

The fun-loving, techy alternatives to hushed art galleries

📅 26 February 2015 – 1 March 2015

📍 Canal Convergence, Arizona, USA

● The Pool

Inspired by a night of splashing in tidal pools, this light show is more than just a circle-tastic dancefloor. Each of the 106 platforms contains pressure sensors, an Arduino board and an LED strip to ensure your steps and jumps bounce light around The Pool. Unusually, there's no central computer coordinating the effect. Instead, each platform follows a simple set of propagating rules that ensure the light show varies every time. It was so popular at the Burning Man festival, its designer Jen Lewin decided to tweak the software to make it less confusing when it's attacked by hordes of moth-like humans.

jenlewinstudio.com

○ In Orbit

📍 Kunstsammlung
Nordrhein-Westfalen,
Dusseldorf, Germany

If anyone asks you if there are any playgrounds for adults, tell them about Tomas Saraceno. The Argentinian artist's 'Cloud Cities' let you frolic around in giant bubbles, and now the 25m-high In Orbit has steel nets to give a sense of weightlessness.

tomassaraceno.com



○ Human Harp

📅 15 March 2015
📍 Clifton Suspension Bridge,
Bristol, UK

What better way to celebrate the 150th birthday of Brunel's Clifton Suspension Bridge than by turning it into a giant harp? Previously used on the Brooklyn Bridge, the project processes vibrations so that 'movicians' can play structures like instruments.

humanharp.org



[Jen Lewin Studio photo by Denise Leong.]

Tablets let visitors use the project's online modelling software to submit their own designs. Every day, one of these is printed live in the museum and added to the display, turning amateurs into exhibited artists.

THE CROWDSOURCERS

Because art in the future will be co-authored by the masses...

until 30 August 2015

Techniska Museet, Stockholm, Sweden

▽ Amateur Intelligence Radio

◆ St Paul's Union Depot, Minnesota, USA

A historic building in Saint Paul now hosts its own radio chat show. Combining stories, real-time data and the building's own thoughts and memories, the show is automatically generated then delivered in a Siri-like voice to anyone who tunes in online.

airstories.mn



▽ Talking Statues

◆ London & Manchester, UK

Statues aren't renowned for their cracking one-liners, but tap your NFC phone or scan the QR code on their purple plaques and you'll get a call from the real person (OK, an actor) telling you their story. The 'Fiducial Voice Beacons' project does the same for the pioneers of modern communication.

talkingstatues.co.uk



▽ Co(de)Factory

It might look disturbingly like the egg chamber in *Prometheus* but there are no aliens lurking here, just an interactive 3D printing project. Part of Google's roaming DevArt exhibition, Co(de)Factory lets you submit your own object designs (or modify other people's) via 3D-modelling tools that are available online or at the exhibition. Each day, the best design is then fabricated by the 3D printer in front of the museum's visitors. The project's designer Karsten Schmidt says his aim is to show that "authorship is actually not that important, it's the outcomes that count". In other words, the days of £100million Picassos are over. devartcodefactory.com

THE LUMINARIES

Well, who doesn't enjoy being befuddled by pretty lights?



📅 29 January – 1 February 2015

📍 Light Festival, Ghent, Belgium

◆ Cloud

There's no need to reach for your Fulton brolly under this cloud. A sculpture that's been built from around 6000 burnt-out light bulbs, it tempts crowds into making lightning effects on the surface by pulling strings dangling around them. Because there are only 250 lit bulbs creating the effect from the centre, it only consumes 20 amps of power (about the same as two household sockets). And if this green version isn't quite techie enough for you, a larger installation called Cloud Ceiling uses motion sensors and can be found hovering in the ceiling of Chicago's brilliantly-named Progress Bar.

incandescentcloud.com

◆ Theatre Ad Infinitum

📅 Tuesday 20 – Saturday 24 January 2015

📍 The Barbican, London, UK

Following rave reviews at the Fringe, this sci-fi show's portrayal of an Orwellian future where implants connect brains to cyberspace will be hitting London's Barbican. Expect 'intense darkness' and lots of lasers.

theatreadinfinity.co.uk



◆ Play The House

📅 until 31 December 2014

📍 Nod Building, Stockholm, Sweden

Here's why the local shop is sold out of Philips Hues. Stockholm's Nod Building has been covered with dozens of the web-connected bulbs so people can play the game Mastermind (the 1970s peg-based puzzler) on the building's walls via the net.

playthehouse.com



ONLINE ARTISTRY

Allergic to museums? These will come to you



The Unfilmables (due Autumn 2015)

Explore the lives of those hiding from The Man.

thespace.org



Silk

Create trippy art patterns simply by moving your cursor.

weavesilk.com



Collider

The Large Hadron Collider sim you've been waiting for.

funktroniclabs.com



Hello Again

Next-gen music vids including a 360° view of a Beck concert.

hello-again.com



So Pure. So Stylish. Solo.

Arcam's world-class reputation for state-of-the-art home cinema and high performance Hi-Fi systems has now been applied to a soundbar.

The new Solo bar and sub have been designed to make Arcam's legendary sound quality accessible to a wider audience, setting a new standard for music and movie reproduction from a soundbar.

For more information on these landmark products or to find your nearest stockist visit www.arcam.co.uk

ARCAM
Bringing music and movies to life

THE NEXT EVOLUTION OF TELEVISION

Say hello to a new generation of TV as
OLED technology delivers the ultimate display

The first time you watch an OLED television is the first time you realise exactly how amazing a picture can look. The contrast. The colours. The motion-handling. It's all in another league to traditional LED sets.

LG's new curved OLED television has landed. The EC930V is available as a 55in model and its picture will leave you sprawled, goggle-eyed, on your sofa. OLED TV goes beyond with vivid colours, brighter pictures and deeper blacks all racing along 1,000 times faster than a traditional LED TV. It also has great wide-angled viewing angles thanks to a sleek curved design.

The EC930V is crammed with tech to enhance viewing – from the LG Colour Refiner that adjusts colour temperature for consistency and balance, to an infinite contrast ratio and eye-popping 3D.

It also features webOS, LG's celebrated Smart TV platform, and a simple way to switch between broadcast TV, apps, on-demand services and more.

The next evolution of TV is here.

But LG don't want to stop there... The hotly anticipated 4K OLED – a TV that combines the two best screen technologies to produce a picture-perfect display – is available from December this year.

It's the next
evolution of
TV – and it's
available now



3

must-watch Blu-rays for the EC930

Nebraska (2013)

If it's contrast you want, you can't go wrong with a black-and-white film. And if you want comedy, drama, pathos and weirdness, you can't go wrong with *Nebraska*. As compelling as it is beautiful and with the infinite contrast and extreme detail of OLED and ULTRA HD 4K it's even more satisfying. Turn the lights off, bask in the screen and you'll be blown away.

Star Trek (2009)

It's hard to pick just one thing OLED does amazingly. But colour is certainly up there – and few directors use colour quite like JJ Abrams, the man at the helm of the 2009 *Star Trek* reboot. Inky blacks set off vivid, visceral space scenes here – which are made even more immersive thanks to the EC930's curved display.

Saving Private Ryan (1998)

LG's OLED televisions are 1000 times faster than conventional LCD screens. That means super-accurate, super-sharp motion. *Saving Private Ryan*, harrowing though it might be, has some of the most testing action on disc – so it's only fitting that you do it justice with a television capable of displaying it in all its terrifying glory.

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Blufiniti

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TO SUIT YOUR STYLE



ONLY
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5 OF THE BEST

Bluetooth headphones

Wireless audio used to sound like a robot barking from a baked bean tin, but thankfully, not any more. So which pair should embrace your ears?



Beats Studio Wireless

What's the vibe?

Dr Dre's pricey, bassy Beats are the original celebrity cans, and they've made the good Doctor a billionaire. But while the originals favoured enormous branding and chunky design, the latest Beats are more subtle, with smaller 'b's and a more head-hugging shape.

Banging or slamming?

Hug's the word: these are seriously comfortable 'phones. The pads are soft, the grip isn't too tight, and they're light. The buttons could be less clicky, especially as you'll be double- and triple-pressing them to control your music. Besides

the buttons, there's Bluetooth and noise cancelling, but no NFC or touch control.

As with previous Beats, the sound is tuned to a pretty narrow spectrum of music: if you only listen to pop and hip-hop and you value bass above all else, you'll love them. For us, though, £330 is a lot of money for a one-trick pony.

Price £330 / beatsbydre.com
Tech Weight 260g ● **NFC** No
 ● **Noise cancellation** Yes
 ● **Battery (hrs)** 12

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★
 The most refined Beats yet, but you pay heavily for the brand

Vibe Audio CVNDSH

What's the vibe?

Headphone endorsement isn't just for rappers: these special editions of Vibe Audio's Fli Over Bluetooth cans have been rebranded by one of the heroes of British cycling, Mark Cavendish. Or 'Mrk Cvndsh', as we've started calling him.

Banging or slamming?

The colours and stamp give them a gaming headset look, but despite the all-plastic build they feel pretty solid, with a distinctive angular shape and a soft-touch finish.

They're not amazingly comfortable, though. There's not quite enough swivel, and

while different shapes suit different heads, we found they squeezed a touch too hard.

At twice the price of the originals, the sound isn't great. Harsh and a bit distorted at times, it's cluttered and lacking detail and punch. On multiple occasions we heard hissing and crackling – and we weren't listening to snakes and fire.

Price £200 / vibeaudio.co.uk
Tech Weight 308g ● **NFC** Yes
 ● **Noise cancellation** Yes
 ● **Battery (hrs)** 12

STUFF SAYS ★★☆☆☆
 At this price, only the most serious Cav-fans need apply

BEST FOR...
FIDDY
FANS

SMS Audio Sync by 50

What's the vibe?

While Dr Dre is the original hip-hop entrepreneur, 50 Cent is no slouch on the business front: he's a prolific investor who famously sold his stake in the Vitaminwater drinks brand for around \$100million. Can he repeat the same success with his own brand of headphones? If these are anything to go by, we're going to say no.

Banging or slamming?

No two ways about it: these feel cheap. Pick them up and they rattle, which doesn't bode well for longevity. Despite the foam padding, they're not very comfortable, with a design that could make the tops of your ears ache.

The sound might have the same effect: it's not surprising to find an over-emphasis on bass, but they're also a bit harsh, and music emerges in a big, bulging muddle. There's no noise cancellation or NFC either. Battery life is good, but the sound and build quality mean Dre has nothing to worry about.

Price £200 / smsaudio.com

Tech Weight 159g • **NFC** No

• **Noise cancellation** No

• **Battery (hrs)** 17

STUFF SAYS ★★☆☆☆

If you're set on a pair of rapper-cans, Fiddy's are a definite second-best

BEST FOR...
LONG-TERM
COMFORT

Samsung Level-Over

What's the vibe?

Samsung, never a company to let a niche go unfilled, has waded in to the big-headphone battle. These are big, bold and packed with tech: easy pairing with NFC, active noise cancellation and a smart panel for touch controls, as well as a companion app for adjusting EQ.

Banging or slamming?

The panel gives you smartphone-style tap and swipe controls. It's easy to use and responsive, but is open to accidental mis-swipes. The app gives finer control, but we couldn't get it working with non-Samsung gear. These headphones have a fancy, 'executive chair' feel; that chair turns out to be mostly plastic, but this does make them lighter, and of the group these are the most comfortable.

We're not blown away by the sound quality, though. They have a wide frequency range and they get loud when necessary, but they lack clarity. The midrange is lacking, and the top end sounds harsh.

Price £300 / samsung.com

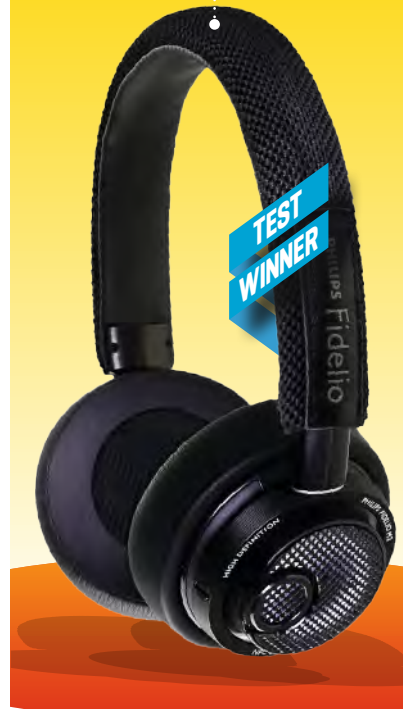
Tech Weight 350g • **NFC** Yes

• **Noise cancellation** Yes

• **Battery (hrs)** 10

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★

They're packed to the gills with tech, but they won't convince audio purists

BEST FOR...
SOUND
QUALITY

Philips Fidelio M2BT

What's the vibe?

While most of the headphones here are largely made from plastic, these rather more grown-up cans come clad in metal, leather and cloth, with super-soft memory foam earpads that mean you can comfortably wear them for long stretches.

Banging or slamming?

The on-ear design might not be as on-trend as the Beats, but the swivelly earcups and well-judged clamp force (Clamp Force – good band name) add up to a seriously comfy headphone. The right ear has some simple but effective controls for volume and playback; there's NFC for pairing and a mic for calls.

As for audio, these win easily with a rich, full-bodied sound. Wireless headphones often have a tendency to sound a bit coarse, but not here. What you get is refined, smooth and consistent. There's also a ton of detail, with well-defined vocals and just the right amount of bass punch.

Price £250 / philips.co.uk

Tech Weight 119g • **NFC** Yes

• **Noise cancellation** No

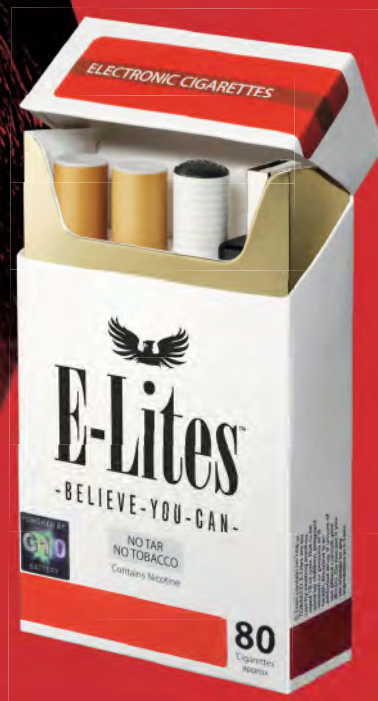
• **Battery (hrs)** 10

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★

Superb sound with a minimum of fuss: Philips shows the rest how it's done

A man with a dark beard and a tattoo on his neck is shown in profile. The image is split vertically: the left side is white and the right side is red. The man is wearing a dark suit jacket.


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VESSEL MANIA

Not many people on this earth have experienced the thrills of 100mph on water. But for the crew of Vector Racing's V40 R powerboat, it's all part of the day job

Ask a roomful of motorists if they've ever hit 100mph on public roads, and many will sheepishly raise a hand. But put the same question to a group of boaters and you'll get a very different response. Hitting the century mark on water is a white-knuckle ride that should only be attempted by the most experienced and decorated pilots.

I'm about to find out if going at full throttle in the Martini-liveried Vector V40 R powerboat, with its twin 750bhp V10 engines, is the watery equivalent of driving a Bugatti Veyron at top speed. Nervous doesn't quite cut it.

WATER DYNAMIC

The Vector V40 R is by no means a run-of-the-mill speedboat. It's hand-crafted in Kelowna, Canada, using the latest materials and techniques. Fashioned from a concoction of Vinylester resin, super-tough E-glass, Kevlar and carbon fibre to reinforce

the most vulnerable parts, it's the perfect mix of strength and flexibility so the hull can absorb the sort of battering water inflicts at these speeds.

Arriving at a small harbour in Hampshire, at first it's difficult to spot the white, Martini-stickered V40 R because the sleek machine sits so low in the water. The only thing guiding my senses is the intermittent bark of the V10 engines. But, once spotted, it's difficult to ignore – the elongated nose, aggressively aerodynamic side strakes and multiple exhaust pipes at the rear signifying its speedy intent. If ever there were a supercar for the sea, this would be it.

The tie-in with Martini also seems a natural fit, as the Italian vermouth manufacturer has recently rekindled its love affair with motorsport after a long hiatus. "The livery is the perfect fit for our boat," explains Vector pilot Pete Dredge. "Not only is it

associated with the pinnacle of motorsport like Le Mans and Formula 1, but it also allows us access to the type of customer who might be interested in buying a boat like this."

Pete goes on to tell me that Vector Racing had a serious presence at the 2014 Monaco Grand Prix and certain well-heeled individuals were gifted a test drive in the US\$1 million vessel. It goes without saying, customer interest piqued once the throttle was opened for the first time.

EYES IN THE BACK OF ITS HULL

After clambering into the Vector V40 R through a small hatch in the roof, I'm presented with four Alcantara-clad bucket seats, a number of baffling pieces of navigational equipment and more switches and buttons than most airliners. Visibility is poor from inside: just a couple of Perspex screens act as windshields, while large side windows allow the pilot to see where he's going during turns.

The main equipment consists of four large screens that do everything from giving fuel and power readouts to providing navigational information. "Raymarine provides all the important equipment," explains Pete as he calls up a load of information that means very little to me. "All four screens are linked but can act separately in case of failure. We always know where we're going, even if we have technical issues," he adds. Well, knowing where you're ▶



[Words: Leon Poultney]

THE V40 R IN NUMBERS

\$1m

The customer price of the V40 R vessel

400 miles

The range of the boat at full speed

1mpg

The fuel consumption at full throttle

20G

Forces inflicted on the crew at max speed

125 mph

The V40 R's maximum speed





going is pretty important when blasting across open water at speeds in excess of 100mph.

Pete also nonchalantly drops into conversation that he still holds the record for the fastest lap around Britain. Forty hours of non-stop, full-throttle racing, a feat he puts down to the boat's cutting-edge gadgetry.

INDESTRUCTIBLE GOPROS

The boat also features one of the most sophisticated video set-ups in the world. A number of broadcast-quality cameras are situated inside and outside the vessel, so the crew can capture record attempts and high-octane racing in real time.

Alex Puczyniec, the chief photographer, explains that the cameras are encased in steel and then filled with nitrogen to prevent condensation build-up. "We've had situations where the cameras have experienced impacts that measure half a tonne. They've been carried on filming without a hitch, like the strongest and most expensive GoPros you can imagine."

The cameras aren't just capturing footage for posterity: a reversing cam makes light work

of tight docking manoeuvres, while a live feed from the engine bay allows Pete and his team to keep an eye on mechanicals.

"One of the team is constantly checking the cameras when we're at full throttle," says Pete. "If we see smoke, condensation or a jet of fluids from that area, we know it's time to slow down and check everything is OK."

There's even an iPhone holder nestled in among the plethora of fire extinguishers and emergency breathing apparatus. According to the team, it can be linked into the sophisticated noise-cancelling comms system so the crew can

Fellow sailors stare on slack-jawed as more and more throttle is applied

make hands-free phone calls or even listen to a Spotify playlist (not highly recommended at top speed).

HIGH SEAS LUNACY

We slowly edge our way out of the harbour as Pete explains how I buckle the enormous lap harness and correctly fit my tiny, neck-mounted lifejacket. The twin V10 engines chug and splutter behind us as several cylinders are deactivated for emissions reasons. The bucket seats are surprisingly cossetting and I'm told that they feature a sophisticated air shock system that alleviates some of the bumps we're about to experience. According to the crew, it's not uncommon to experience 20Gs during some of the larger drops between waves.

The harbour opens up and Pete begins to apply more throttle – the remaining cylinders are called upon and the engines begin to roar in beautiful harmony. The bow lifts as the enormous propellers start putting the power down and the scenery out of the side windows suddenly speeds up. Fellow sailors in their weekend pleasure boats stare on slack-jawed as more and more throttle is applied.





Fast and furious

A mix of resin, E-glass, Kevlar and carbon fibre keeps the boat's hull stable and secure when buffeted by the waves at high speeds

THE TECH

1 HIGH-DEF VIDEO SYSTEM

There are switch-operated cameras with crystal glass fascias on the boat's exterior and inside the cockpit. The audio system records ambient noise as well as anything spoken over the comms system in broadcast quality: the ultimate memento.

2 RAYMARINE NAVIGATION SYSTEM

Four giant screens give an accurate GPS location, while menus show top speeds, fuel consumption, oil pressure and engine management options. The screens can also act as monitors so the crew can keep an eye on engine fires. Handy.

3 SHOCK-ABSORBING SEATS

Occupants can experience up to 20Gs when motoring at top speed – easily enough to break equipment and bones. The seats are designed to soak up the majority of bumps so Pete and his crew can race for hours at a time without any risk of injury.

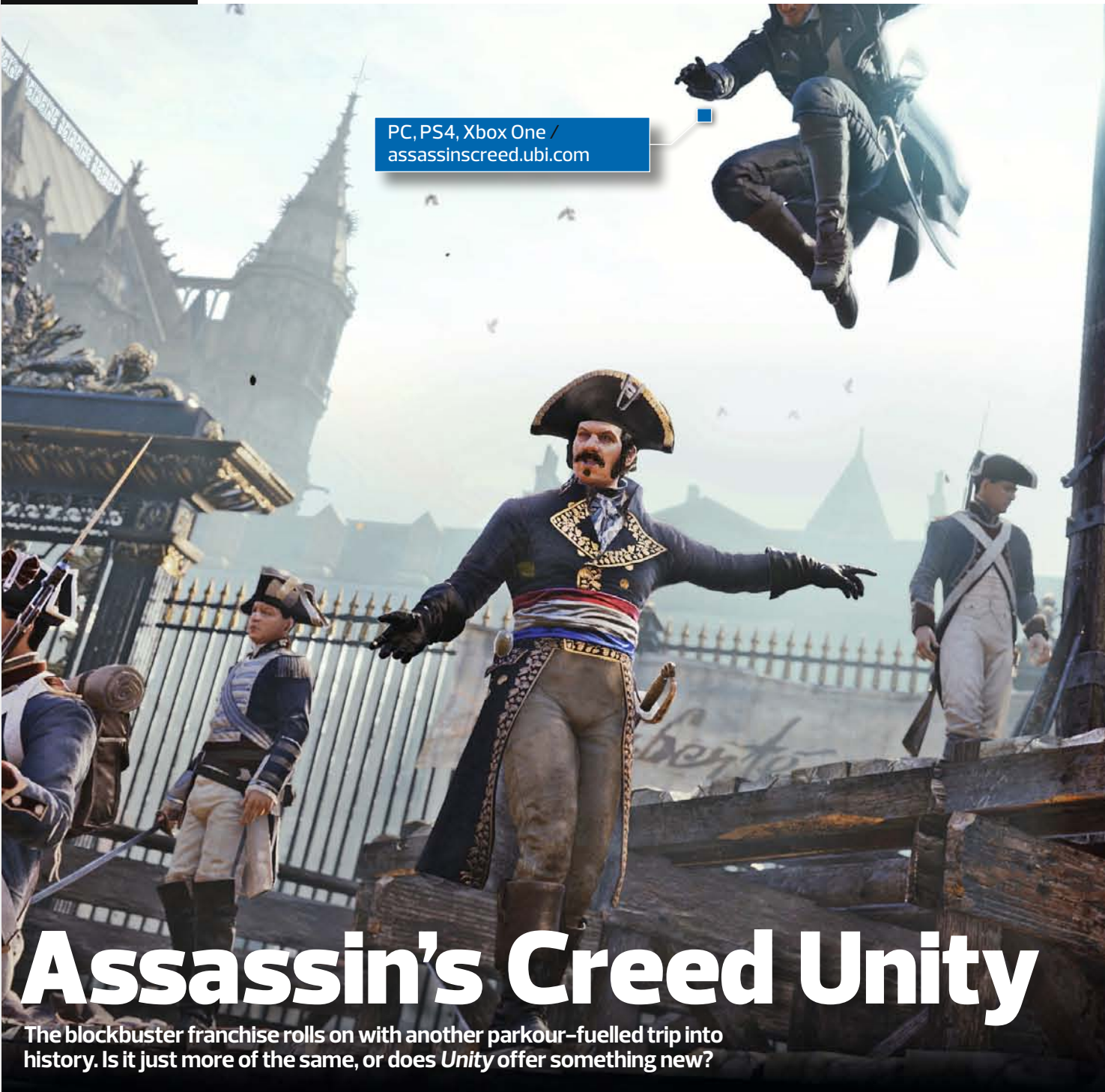
"We're at 95mph," Pete shouts over the roar of the engines. It doesn't feel like we're speeding at all, as the craft practically wafts over the unpredictable Solent. I spot a small boat fully laden with people ahead but before I've had time to blink we've shot past them, soaring through the air.

Pete decides to repeat the run so we can get a little more speed; he pulls into a sharp right turn, the boat practically lying on its side as my seat lifts a few feet in the air. As I grab for the nearest handle, I can hear Pete chuckle over the intercom. He pulls harder on the steering wheel until it feels like we might flip over completely but the boat settles and the GPS-based speedometer tickles the 100mph mark.

"Not bad," says Pete as he navigates another group of tiny sailboats on this busy stretch of water. "If there was less traffic, we could go even faster."

We hit over 100mph on that final run, plenty enough for a landlubber like me. Next up for the V40 R? An attempt on the Poole–Cherbourg cross-Channel world record in late February 2015. Don't bet against the champagne corks popping once again. **S**





PC, PS4, Xbox One /
assassinscreed.ubi.com

Assassin's Creed Unity

The blockbuster franchise rolls on with another parkour-fuelled trip into history. Is it just more of the same, or does *Unity* offer something new?

Triple-A blockbuster video game sequels are now in the same camp as healthy film franchises – and they have the same constraints. Players pay money for a new plot, some new features and possibly a new protagonist, but the nuts and bolts remain the same. There's not much room to tinker with a formula that earns hundreds of millions per year. If it ain't broke, you don't even think about fixing it.

This is the situation *Assassin's Creed Unity* finds itself in. Like

earlier games it features a hooded killer, a plot that dovetails with historical events, tons of side quests, collectibles and trinkets, and a wide-open city for players to parkour through. It's a more stealth-based affair than previous entries in the franchise, assassination missions are more open-ended and combat has been seriously re-jigged to be more challenging: you can't just spam the same defensive move and cut through waves of enemies. But generally, if you've ever played

an *Assassin's Creed* game, you know largely what you're signing up to with *Unity*.

The scope of the game, however, is head and shoulders over anything this series has attempted before. Set in Paris on the eve of the French Revolution, the map is not only on the same scale as that of its real-world counterpart, it's also filled with catacombs, interiors to explore and hidden secrets. Players can investigate murder mysteries, solve Nostradamus riddles and

take part in Assassination and Heist missions with friends in co-op mode. There are also Initiate Chests they can sync up with the second-screen app to earn rewards and rare armour unlocks. It's also worth pointing out that, on new-gen machines, everything in *Assassin's Creed Unity* looks absolutely stunning.

This release sees *Assassin's Creed* in a holding pattern, then, but for players who are fans of the series it's essential.

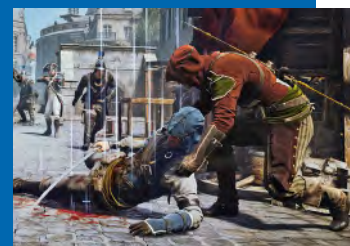
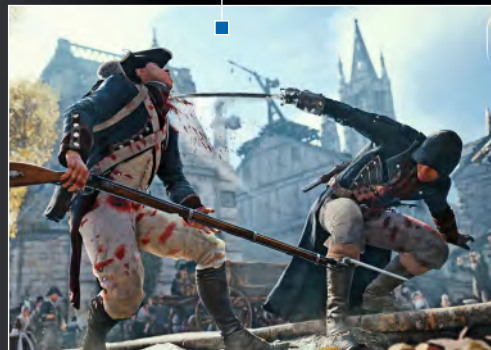
Nick Cowen

STUFF SAYS Huge but not innovative, a game for those already loyal to the Creed ★★★★★



Rear window: parkour your way over roofs and through buildings

Learn your counters: you can't beat enemies with one attack any more

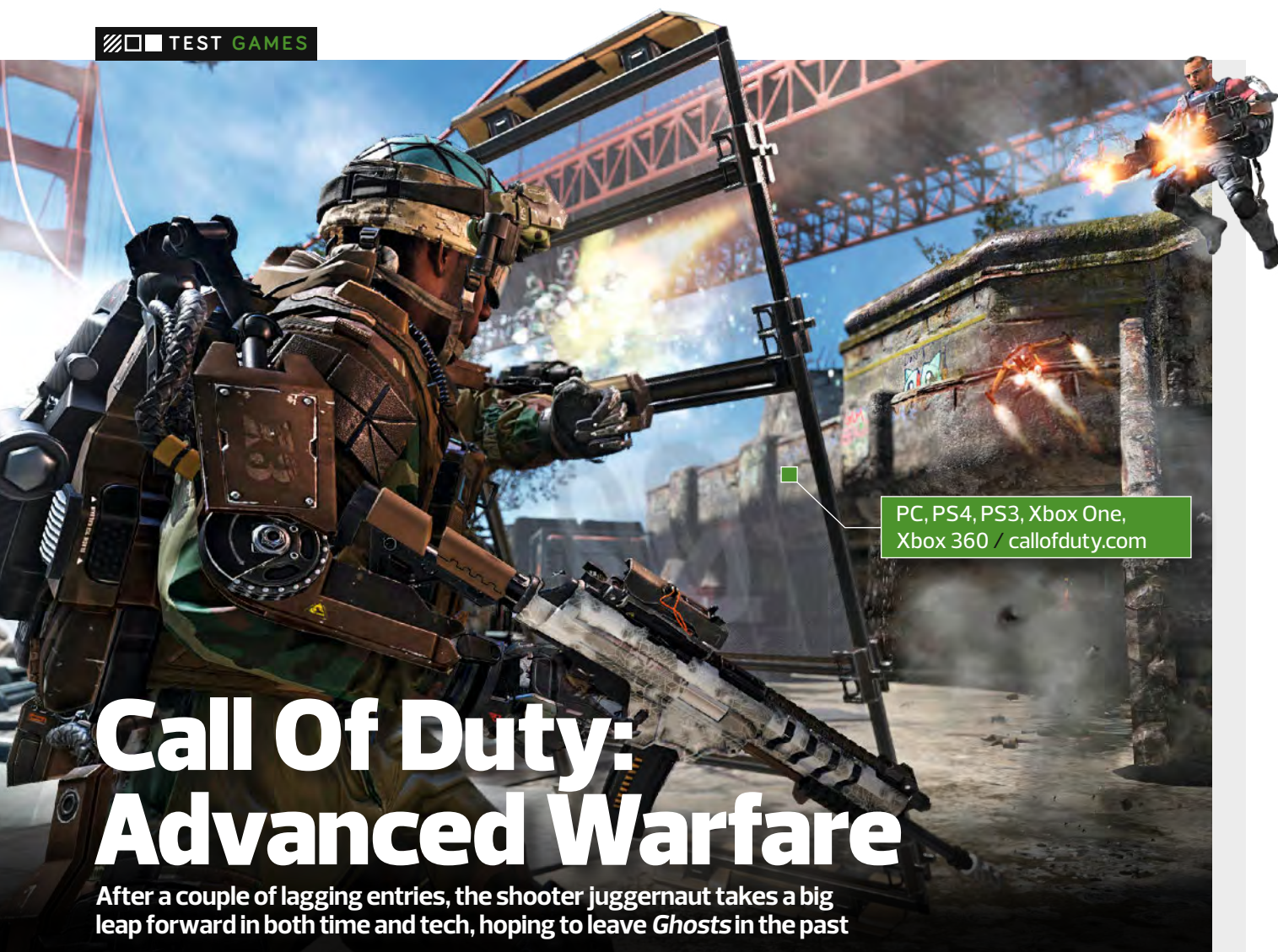


Co-op on the campaign trail

The big new feature in *Unity* is co-op play on the same map as the main campaign. One player acts as the host, and once they invite a couple of friends into an online party, between two and four of them can take on missions.

Those group missions are divided into two categories: Assassinations and Heists. The former usually sees players having to complete one or two tasks, such as pickpocketing letters of passage or tackling an obstacle course, before zeroing in on their target. The latter involves sneaking into Templar-controlled areas and stealing precious artefacts. Once again, rewards for mission completion are tallied up in cash and unlocks for weapons, armour and equipment, so they're worth doing even if you're a lone player, just to get your hands on better gear.

A word of advice before you proceed, though: invest in a decent headset and make sure your online connection is strong. First off, there are few things more infuriating than trying to coordinate an attack with players you can't speak to. Second, some missions are rather lengthy and you don't want to run the risk of being dumped out of a lobby because your connection failed.



PC, PS4, PS3, Xbox One,
Xbox 360 / callofduty.com

Call Of Duty: Advanced Warfare

After a couple of lagging entries, the shooter juggernaut takes a big leap forward in both time and tech, hoping to leave *Ghosts* in the past

In 2013, *Call Of Duty: Ghosts* couldn't help but feel like a stopgap to something better. Luckily, *Call Of Duty: Advanced Warfare* is just that: something better. It's nothing revolutionary, but a definite step up thanks to a fun, over-the-top campaign and a nicely tweaked approach to multiplayer.

The near-future setting of recent entries was starting to wear thin, so what does *Advanced Warfare* do? It goes even further: up to 2054, when an injured US soldier is recruited by the private military corporation Atlas and its ambitious CEO Jonathan Irons (voiced by Kevin Spacey). Fast-forwarding 50 years is a smart move, as the wildly creative military tech livens up the familiar gameplay.

Key to that approach is the exoskeleton, a hulking frame of armour that gives super strength and allows your soldier to boost-jump into the air and eventually fire off a grappling hook to zip around stages. In multiplayer, the bionic impact makes for a faster, more chaotic experience

as double-jumping and power-launching your body through the air adds a *Titanfall*-style mobility to the action. Despite this, the addition does not overcomplicate the multiplayer design and, playing it on the Xbox, there's no hint of lag.

Add to that hovering bikes and tanks, walking mech suits, forced-energy shotguns and all manner of other future tech, and *Call Of Duty* certainly looks and feels like a brand new game.

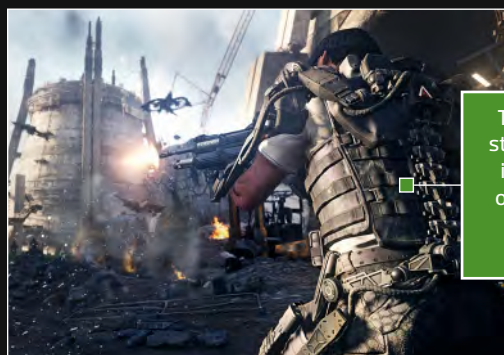
Although the four-player Exo Survival co-op mode comes off as a dull, obligatory addition, *Advanced Warfare* delivers the strong single-player experience the series has lacked of late. The violence can get silly but it is entertaining stuff – especially during the really intense moments and the stunning graphical flourishes.

With a franchise this big it's always going to feel more like an episode than a full-blown revolution, but this is the kick in the pants that *Call Of Duty* badly needed.

Andrew Hayward



Attention, *House Of Cards* fans: Kevin Spacey's back as your main baddie

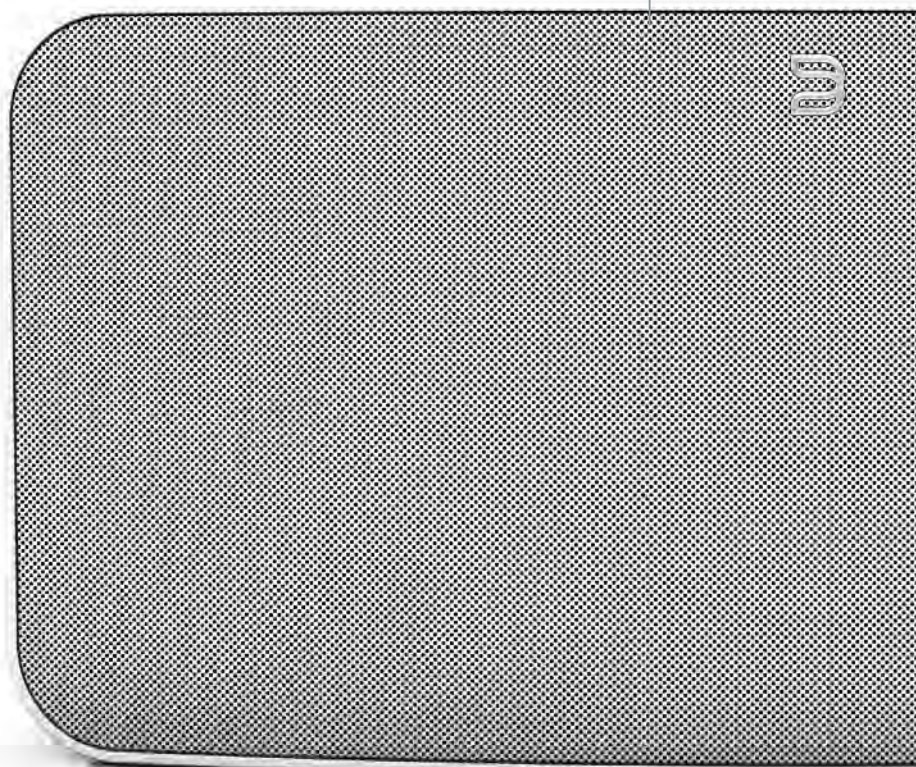


The graphics stand out best in moments of beautifully cinematic mayhem

STUFF SAYS Enticing future tech and online play has made *CoD* exciting again ★★★★★

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Will it be a pad tie?

Two high-end tablet kings from the rival clans of Apple and Google are ready to fight to the death for your cash. Which will you choose?

Apple iPad Air 2

What's the story?

Another year, another iPad. But this one is a bit special. For the same £400 as last year, you get the world's thinnest tablet that's also the world's best for use out in the sun. It even has a fingerprint scanner just like the iPhone 6. The correct response: Cor, blimey.

Is it any good?

At first glance, the iPad Air 2 may seem a bit too similar to last year's Air. But it's a big step forward in some ways. At 6.1mm it's incredibly slim — much skinnier than the Nexus 9. This and the relatively light 437g weight mean it's fairly portable despite being bigger than the Nexus thanks to its 9.7-inch display.

It doesn't mind being outside either, as it has a fantastic anti-glare coating that all but banishes reflections. Just make sure you don't take it out in the rain — it loves the sun, but really hates the wet stuff.

With its metal body, it's a bit snazzier and better-made than the Google tab; and while the Nexus's graphics brain sounds impressive, so is the iPad's A8X chipset. Devs have even got parts of *Battlefield 4* working on the thing. Don't mind paying an extra £80? The iPad is the full package.

Price £400 / apple.com/uk

Tech 9.7in 2048x1536 IPS LCD

● Triple-core Apple A8X CPU ● 8MP front camera, 1.2MP rear ● 240x169.5x6.1mm ● 437g (Wi-Fi version) 444g (4G version)

Stuff says ★★★★★

If Android isn't a major draw, the iPad Air 2 is the tablet that hits it out of the park

Google Nexus 9

What's the story?

The first new Nexus tablet since the 2013 Nexus 7 shakes things up with an iPad-shaped 4:3 screen, super-powered 192-core graphics chip and thenew Android 5.0 Lollipop OS. It's also £80 cheaper than the iPad Air 2, giving you some change to tool up with accessories.

Is it any good?

The Nexus 9 isn't going to make jaws drop like an iPad Air 2 might. With a plastic rear and a thicker body, it's more ordinary-looking and feeling. The new, squatter aspect doesn't half make it great to use compared with earlier Androids, though — especially for sofa-based browsing. And the 8.9-inch screen offers exactly the same number of pixels as the iPad.

Google seems to want to make Android a bit more iPad-like in its style, too. Lollipop shakes off many of Android's residual nerdy bits, and the smartly restrained colours of its interface would make Farrow & Ball proud. Sadly, there are still many Android apps that aren't optimised for tablets, and one of Android's great advantages (removable storage) has been left out.

For the hardcore crowd, the Tegra K1 brings oodles of power, but we struggled to find a real-world difference. They're both as fast and smooth as a freshly buttered otter.

Price £320 / google.com/nexus

Tech 8.9in 2048x1536 IPS LCD ● Dual-core 2.5GHz Nvidia Tegra K1 ● 8MP front camera, 1.6MP rear ● 228.2x153.7x7.9mm ● 425g (Wi-Fi version) 436g (4G version)

Stuff says ★★★★★

The design isn't as pristine, but it's the most convincing iPad-style Android alternative

LOLLIPOP-FLAVoured ANDROID

● So what's new for the Nexus 9? Mostly it's a splash more pastel in the OS colour palette. Gmail, Contacts, Calendar and the Play Store haven't escaped the spring cleaning and it all runs with a bit more pep than KitKat. There's the odd hint of lag, though: it's still a spring chick brushing off the last bits of eggshell.

● Handy features include lockscreen notifications, guest mode, tap-to-wake and a battery saver mode. What about the turning cogs? Android 5.0 now supports 64-bit processors and is better primed for connections to other devices. That hints at deeper integration with Android Wear watches, and in 2015 Lollipop will include Android TV and Android Auto support.



**1 Film fanatic**

Lasting for just under 12 hours of video play on one charge, the 6700mAh Nexus battery does a great job without having to bloat out the body at all.

2 Face the music

The Nexus's subtle front-facing speakers get you the stereo sound effect the iPad Air 2 lacks, but Apple's tablet goes that little bit louder.

3 Fingerprints

The Touch ID scanner makes its iPad debut. You can use it instead of typing in passwords, to unlock the tablet and in an expanding handful of apps.

4 Room for two

Two separate speaker drivers live on the bottom of the Apple tab. At top volume this causes a lot of vibration, and they don't provide a real sense of stereo.

**TEST
WINNER**

The phab 4

The Galaxy Note 4 is here to show Apple the right way to build a big phone. Sophie Charara spends four weeks with pixels, S Pens and more pixels

E630 / samsung.com



DAY 01

When the Note 4 arrived, my first thought was: 'Is this still a phablet?' Regular-sized phones are so big now, with a 5.5in LG G3, a 5.2in Moto X and a 4.7in iPhone 6, that it just doesn't look that huge any more.

Let's get something straight. If a handset has a 5.5in screen or bigger, it's a phablet. So that includes the half-successful iPhone 6 Plus experiment, the OnePlus One and the Note 4.

The G3 is the exception as it feels like a much smaller phone.

So it's here in my hands and the 5.7in Note 4 feels... a lot like the Note 3, sitting between the LG and 6 Plus in size. It's not easy enough to hold for everyone but it's close. The flatter sides, combined with a softer, less tacky faux leather back panel, make it easy for me to grip.

But what really makes it feel premium (yes, premium) is the

new metal band running around the edges, as I first fondled on the Alpha. The Note is still light at 176g but that dash of sturdy metal makes a hell of a difference.

It's not iPhone-pretty, but once I turn it on I forget all about the bulges and bumps. I was prepared for the retina-stunning AMOLED colours but the extra detail is immediately noticeable in hi-res pics. Of course my eyes are to-ing and fro-ing between this and the 6 Plus, which you're unlikely to do. But trust me, you'll love things in 515ppi on this big screen.

I couldn't wait to try out Multi Window, the split-screen feature

that's been coming along nicely for years. Now I'm running two windows at once, popping one out to full screen and minimising the other to an icon bubble. Dizzying stuff. Once I've taken half an hour to master it, I'm sold. Another trick is dragging and dropping between apps: it's a bit half-baked but works OK for text.

Everything is whizzing and banging, until I see a stutter. And another one! Hmm... there's no question this device is powerful, but I'll keep my eye on it.

I slide the S Pen out of its hideaway but Action Memo hasn't changed much. I'll play with it later.



"What really makes it feel premium (yes, premium) is the new metal band running around the edges"



Tech

Screen
5.7in, 2560x1440 (515ppi) IPS

Processor
2.7GHz
Snapdragon 805

RAM 3GB

OS Android 4.4

Storage 32GB
(+up to 128GB microSD)

Battery
3220mAh

Camera
16MP, OIS, 4K video, 3.7MP

Dimensions
153x79x8.6mm

Weight 176g



DAY 03

So far I've been using the Note 4 exactly as I used the Note 3. It has a few new tricks though, namely fingerprint scanning and a heart-rate monitor (neither executed that brilliantly). For real gadget wackiness, I'm holding out for the wraparound Galaxy Note Edge.

DAY 05

I knew the 16MP camera would be killer and I'm not wrong. It's fast to focus, even faster than the 6 Plus in the moody lights of the *What Hi-Fi?* Awards. Pics are reliably brilliant whatever the conditions, thanks in part to optical image stabilisation (OIS), and wide-angle selfies are erm, selfie-licious. That said, the iPhone's more balanced colours could end up making more sense for serious photographers.

DAY 10

After struggling through a day with the 2K Oppo Find 7, I was pretty worried that all those pixels would mean below-par battery life. Not so here. Ending the day with 10 to 20% left in the tank has become the norm. The 6 Plus lasts a smidgen longer but this is plenty. Now I really can have everything (except peace between fanboys).

DAY 17

By now, my wimmin hands are used to the Note's heft. My thumb still has a good stretch reaching across the screen, mind, and nothing beats the G3's artfully compact engineering. I encounter a tiny bit more lag. Sigh.

DAY 23

Typing out to-do lists just doesn't satisfy my inner productivity penguin, which is why my favourite S Pen trick is actually the simplest: scrawling S Note lists, turning them into widgets and crossing items off. Holding the Note in one hand and S Pen in the other feels natural. The stylus is spindly, but now twice as pressure-sensitive for improved doodling.

DAY 30

Bigger can be better. The Note 4 may be stuffed with features, but the best ones make sure this is a device I have used differently to a 'normal'-sized phone. The iPhone 6 Plus feels like nothing more than an embiggened iPhone in comparison. The Note 4 is higher-specced, better-made and easier to love than any previous Samsung smartphone, and that's something to get excited about.

STUFF SAYS

With huge specs and tiny tweaks, Samsung was first at the big phone game and it's still the best

★★★★★



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McAfee	4.35

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(on a scale of 0 to 6 and 6 being the **highest protection**)
www.av-test.org

Overall Score, January 2011 - January 2014, AV-TEST

Bitdefender	5.3
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Symantec	4.0
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Overall Score, January 2013 - January 2014, AV-TEST

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[Words Lindsey Baker Photography Matt Beedle]



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What Hi-Fi? Awards 2014,
'Product of the Year'



Trusted Reviews 'Recommended',
October 2014



AV Forums 'Highly Recommended',
July 2014



Home Cinema Choice 'Best Buy',
July 2014



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£70 / elvisandkresse.com



WeSC Elton Beanie
£20 / puffa.com



Totes Isotoner Smartouch Gloves
£35 / totes.co.uk



Luke Ladder Scarf
£25 / luke1977.com



Finisterre Fisherman Beanie
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The Android arms race

With notifications, Google Now alerts and fitness tracking, you can now get Android Wear in very different forms. But which techy time-teller is for you?



To Dos



Nearby Notes

USE IT WITH

EVERNOTE

Glanceable shopping lists and work memos on your watch mean less time walking into trolleys with a bad case of phone face.

£free

LG G Watch R

What's the story?

If you fell in love with the Moto 360 but held back for hardware that packs more punch, the G Watch R might be just the thing. How does a fully circular P-OLED screen (the 'p' stands for polymer), bigger battery and a fast Snapdragon 400 chip sound?

Is it any good?

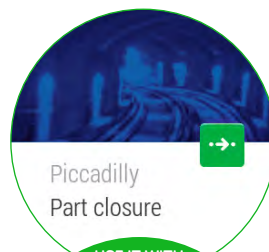
It might have the specs but it's still not perfect. The charging cradle is no fun to use and it still needs charging every other day. The sporty, stainless steel build doesn't suit delicate wrists either. It looks like a regular watch but a chunky, fairly cheap one.

However, if the design works for you, it won't let you down in use. The bright, vivid 1.3in screen is the best we've ogled on a Wear watch yet, performance is brilliant and, like the Moto, its 4GB of storage can now be used to store music. So there's plenty to love about LG's latest wearable.

Tech

Screen 1.3in 320x320 P-OLED
Processor Quad-core Snapdragon 400
Water resistance IP67
Battery 420mAh
Dimensions 46x54x9.7mm, 62g
Price £225 / lg.com/uk

STUFF SAYS An Android Wear hero but its looks won't appeal to everyone ★★★★★



USE IT WITH

CITYMAPPER

Travel disruptions ping to your wrist when switched on in the mobile app. Fingers crossed for journey planning soon.
Efree

Samsung Gear Live

What's the story?

Sticking to Samsung's chunky, very gadgety smartwatch designs, the Gear Live is too square to be hip now that circular-screened Wear watches cost just £30 more. Still, cash-strapped early adopters should choose this over the first G Watch as

the Live offers almost identical functionality to its round rivals.

Is it any good?

It might be more screen on a strap than watch replacement but at least the screen's a good 'un. Notifications are crisp, colours are vivid and text doesn't get cut off

as you scroll through directions or emails as on the Moto and LG. Sadly, the teeny 300mAh battery means the Gear Live rarely gets above a day's use. Like the others, it's waterproof to IP67 (30 mins in 1m of water) and the simple OS improves on the Gear 2. We just don't really want to wear it.

Tech

Screen 1.63in 320x320

Super AMOLED

Processor 1.2 GHz

Battery 300mAh

Dimensions 38x56x8.9mm, 59g

Price £170 / samsung.com/uk

STUFF SAYS Useful and well specced, just not exactly wearable ★★★☆☆

**WEARABLE WIDGETS**

A neat little hack if you want your calendar or Spotify controls just so. Any homescreen widget is miniaturised for your Wear screen. £free

**Pebble smash**

You read magazines backwards, don't you? And on your rebellious journey you've read our Top Ten of Everything section and noticed that the trusty Pebble remains our number one recommendation. Why? It works every time, with iOS and Android, and lasts a whole week on one charge.

**Motorola Moto 360****What's the story?**

The original round smartwatch might have a slice at the bottom of its big, modern 1.5in screen but with sleek styling, minimal bezels, a gorgeous finish and better-quality leather than the LG, it's still the classiest option. It's almost as expensive as the

G Watch R, though, and more if you choose a stainless steel strap.

Is it any good?

Even after an update to the 360, the LG has a slightly better battery life (a day and a half now) and the screen is sharper with an easier-to-read ambient mode.

But the 360 is still the best all-rounder. We prefer the Moto's wireless charging dock, the design is comfortable and unisex, and its mics pick up Google voice commands well. Heart-rate monitoring gives you personalised activity goals and watch faces can be customised in the Connect app.

Tech

Screen 1.56in 320x290 LCD
Processor TI OMAP 3
Water resistance IP67
Battery 320mAh
Dimensions 46x46x11.5mm, 49g
Price £200 / motorola.co.uk

STUFF SAYS An iconic bit of kit: it'll change your mind about smartwatches ★★★★★



Media hoard

What to watch, listen to and read to pass the time between issues of *Stuff* – like the two loyal subscribers above, their eyes fixed anxiously on the letterbox

WATCH

Men, Women & Children_cinema

A mother spies on her child's communications. A bored couple explore extramarital alternatives. A socially awkward boy struggles to deal with real-life girls. What do they all have in common? The web. The big, bad, online wolf.

There are many things to love about the internet: John Oliver's *Last Week Tonight* on YouTube, Google Maps, Stuff.tv and freedom of communication across the globe. *Men, Women & Children* ignores them all, and goes for the jugular. It reflects on the darkest and most depressing things the internet is capable of.

It was only a matter of time before somebody made a film about the internet age (and not just one social network). There's

plenty of potential for fun and it starts very well indeed with Emma Thompson's cool, detached narration alongside *Sherlock*-style on-screen messages poking fun at instant messages and teenage politics. Sadly, this doesn't last.

Soon the film hits a 404 error: jokes not found. The web becomes little more than a force of corruption, responsible for bringing out the worst in everyone. It's an honest look at the ways in which interconnectivity affects our lives, but the rather heavy-handed approach seems to condemn anyone with an internet connection, including you. You're a bad person, apparently.

Ced Yuen

STUFF SAYS ★★☆☆☆



Guardians Of The Galaxy_DVD, Blu-ray

GOTG sees Marvel letting its hair (and fur and twigs) down to an incredible soundtrack as a band of misfit space adventurers try to save the world. Every time you think it's verging on superhero cliché, you realise it's only messing with you. A slice of good old-fashioned, *Star Wars*-style fun.

Sophie Charara

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★



Dawn Of The Planet Of The Apes_Blu-ray

It's not just the simian cast that has brains in this unusually intelligent blockbuster. Andy Serkis is ably assisted by some of the most believable CGI ever seen on the big screen. But the spectacle never outshines the story, with some thinly veiled messages about gun control and inequality.

Tom Wiggins

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★

LISTEN



A Better Tomorrow

_Wu-Tang Clan

There was a time when it looked like *A Better Tomorrow* might beat Dr Dre's *Detox* to the title of hip-hop's *Chinese Democracy*. But after potentially disastrous internal bust-ups (*quelle surprise*) the whole Clan has been reunited for the first time since 2007 — and that includes a back-from-the-dead appearance from ODB on opener *Ruckus In B Minor*. It's a record that's

peppered with references to the Clan's history and struggles to look forward. While it has its moments (*Felt, Hold The Heater, Keep Watch, Ron O'Neal*) *A Better Tomorrow* is the sound of too many individuals pulling in different directions for too long and losing sight of what they're best at.

Tom Wiggins

STUFF SAYS ★★☆☆☆



Run The Jewels

2 _Run The Jewels

There might be no such thing as a free lunch but Killer Mike and El-P have cooked up a free-to-download second helping. The bass hits like blows to the head, and the appearance of Rage Against The Machine's Zack de la Rocha is indicative of a more overtly political album. Vital, confrontational stuff.

Tom Wiggins

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★



Sonic Highways

_The Foo Fighters

There's a lot to like on *Sonic Highways*: the rootsier, jammier virtuoso vibe; the genetically perfect distorted guitar; the excess of stop-start dynamics. But without those irresistible melodies and violently emotional hooks that made the Foos the most popular hard rock band for a generation, it feels a bit overwrought.

Will Findlater

STUFF SAYS ★★☆☆☆

READ



Sci-Fi: Days Of Fear And Wonder

_William Gibson

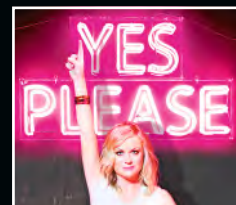
If your interest in sci-fi goes beyond when you'll be getting those self-lacing shoes and the hoverboard that *Back to the Future II* promised you (not till next year, unfortunately) this BFI compendium is packed with seriously in-depth articles on some of the genre's most important movies, trends and themes, from representations of time travel and extra-terrestrials (won't someone think of

the aliens?) to futuristic costumes and how to make sci-fi on a budget.

Things do get a bit 'film studies' at times and it feels more like a very expensive magazine than a book, but the explorations of how sci-fi movies have shaped our world and vice versa are nothing less than fascinating.

Tom Wiggins

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★



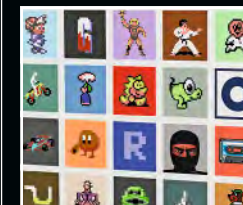
Yes Please

_Amy Poehler

Falling somewhere between memoir and life-manual, comedian and world's BFF Amy Poehler's first book will make you think as much as it makes you laugh. Reading it is a bit like having the *Parks And Recreation* star right there chattering in your face — and it's every bit as warm, wise and wickedly funny as that sounds.

Kate Solomon

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★



Commodore 64: A Visual Compendium

_Bitmap Books

It'll take less time to read than a C64 game takes to load but this collection of artwork has anecdotes from the games' makers, which give unique insights into some of the platform's most fondly remembered games. Never has a loading screen been discussed with such love.

Tom Wiggins

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★

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HI-FI

What to buy,
where to put
it and how to
look after it



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PLAYLIST:
ALTERNATIVE
XMAS FILMS

Festive viewing
without *The*
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NEW YEAR'S EVE

Accessories to
make your bash
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BETA
YOURSELF

HI-FI

So, your Grundig boombox has finally packed in and it's time to build a new hi-fi system. But where to start? *What Hi-Fi?* editor Simon Lucas shares his pearls of audiophile wisdom

THE BASICS

■ **Start at source.** Where is the music for your hi-fi coming from? Your huge collection of CDs? Those vinyl LPs that are finally coming back into fashion? The files on your computer and phone? Or a streaming service?

■ **Choose your style.** Is this hi-fi system confined to one room? Or do you want music to follow you wherever you go? Multi-room audio is booming, but it's not automatically your first choice where sound quality's concerned.

■ **Set a budget.** No matter if your idea of 'hi-fi' is a single



mains-powered speaker with a Bluetooth connection to your phone, or a whole rack's worth of amplifier, CD player, turntable, streamer, network-attached storage and a pair of speakers – stick to your budget.

■ **Prioritise.** Be honest: do you want your money to buy the best sound possible, or do you want

it to buy as much futuristic gadgetry as it can? The best kit isn't necessarily the coolest.

■ **Plan ahead.** It's like a job interview: where do you see yourself in five years' time? If you imagine your system expanding into more rooms, say, or incorporating some home cinema action, you need to factor it in now.

■ **Audition.** A hi-fi store is a rare sight these days, but there's no substitute for hearing the products on your shortlist before you commit the cash. And it's ultimately less of a pain than having to keep sending things back to Amazon.



SYSTEM MATCHING

■ **Check compatibility.**

If you have a record player, you'll need an amp with a phono stage. For wireless speakers, make sure your home network's up to the strain.

■ **Don't overdo it.** The bassiest amplifier, driving the bassiest speakers, will end up – yes – sounding too bassy.

■ **It can all be hi-fi.** Plugging a laptop straight into an amplifier seldom ends well. But using a dedicated off-board DAC like an AudioQuest Dragonfly (£130, audioquest.com) turns your laptop into a hi-fi component.



LEVEL UP WITH...

THE WEBSITE
CLARITY

clarityalliance.co.uk

A supergroup of the UK's biggest hi-fi nerds (that's a compliment) offers tips, expert guidance and (mostly) impartial advice on every aspect of researching, demo-ing, buying and maintaining your hi-fi kit. It's rather old-school, but none the worse for it.

THE BOOK
GET BETTER SOUND

getbetersound.com

Billed as 'the setup manual your system wants', this guide written by Jim Smith, an audio consultant with over 35 years' experience in the field, doesn't advise you to just spend more money. Instead, it discusses practical ways to get better performance from the kit you already own, in order to reach your full audiophile potential.

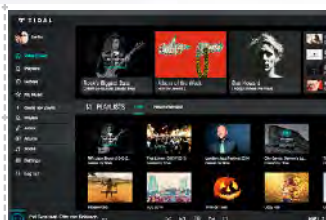


SETTING UP

■ **Get into position.** Put the speakers as level with your head as possible and closer to each other than they are to you.

■ **Don't interfere.** Interference (electrical and physical) can ruin the sound of your hi-fi, so make sure equipment is isolated: ideally electronics on a rack and speakers on stands.

■ **Care and attention.** Don't play records that are thick with dust, CDs that are covered in thumb-prints or music on a speaker that's down to its last 3% of battery life. All these could create problems in your system.



DIGITAL DOMAIN

■ **Archive properly.**

Digitising your music collection only needs doing once. LAME (rarewares.org) is a brilliant MP3 encoder – use it with Exact Audio Copy (exactaudiocopy.de) to keep it sounding pristine.

■ **Pay the premium.** The likes of Qobuz (qobuz.com) and Tidal (tidalhifi.com) stream CD-sized files rather than the compressed Spotify equivalents. They cost more, but they offer more detail.

■ **Make the most of iTunes.** Get into the 'preferences' menu and have a proper experiment with the equalizer settings.



FINISHING TOUCHES

■ **Keep tweaking.** The spikes on your stands will need tightening. Your speaker cable will oxidise and need trimming. The arm on your record player will need realigning too.

■ **Don't rush to judge.** Most box-fresh electronics can take hours to reach their full potential, and speakers (which rely more on physical movement) can sometimes take days or even weeks.

■ **Safe storage.** Store your records vertically and, as with CDs, don't expose them to extremes of temperature.

THE VIDEO
DO'S AND DON'TS
OF ROOM SET-UP

bit.ly/roomsetup
It's a little on the dry side, but this free five-minute primer on hi-fi positioning is all good common-sense stuff. No room is perfect (unless all it has in it is hi-fi, of course), but there's a lot of practical advice on basic pitfalls and managing 'reflections'.



PLAYLIST

ALTERNATIVE XMAS FILMS

Time to trade Muppets for McClane, Martians and machine guns: our picks for a cinematically skewed take on the season of goodwill

Gremlins (1984)

Gremlins introduced the world to Gizmo – the cute ball of fur you shouldn't get wet, expose to bright light or feed after midnight. These rules are of course broken, throwing up a mix of comedy and horror as Billy (Zach Galligan) struggles to end this self-inflicted festive terror.

£2.49 / Google Play, iTunes



Children Of Men (2006)

There isn't a jingle bell or loop of tinsel in sight, but there are clear echoes of the Nativity story in Alfonso Cuarón's dystopian sci-fi, as Clive Owen's Theo struggles to protect a young pregnant mother bearing the first child to be conceived in 20 years.

Google Play / £2.49



Trading Places (1983)

This classic has all the elements of a good Christmas movie: a Christmassy setting, the underlying fable about money not being important and of course love and family (even if it is the unconventional kind). Oh, and Santa Claus – a drunk, depressed, salmon-stealing Santa Claus.

£2.49 / Amazon Instant Video, iTunes



The Thin Man (1934)

Husband-and-wife detective duo Nick and Nora Charles investigate a missing person case, but this takes a back seat to their banter in this screwball classic. "The next person who says 'Merry Christmas' to me, I'll kill 'em," says Nora. That's the spirit.

£2.49 / Amazon Instant Video, Google Play, iTunes



Christmas On Mars (2008)

It's not the first film on this theme (see 1964's *Santa Claus Conquers The Martians*), but this trippy sci-fi oddity from the Flaming Lips is certainly the strangest. Made in Wayne Coyne's back yard, it's oddly charming if perhaps too 'alternative' for your grandmother.

£8 / iTunes



Kiss Kiss Bang Bang (2005)

This was unjustly overlooked on its release, but it's built up a cult following. It's a self-aware romp through the clichés of film noir, complete with femme fatale (Michelle Monaghan sporting a Santa hat) and more twists than a Curly Wurly.

£2.49 / Amazon Instant Video, Google Play, iTunes



Die Hard (1988)

Bruce Willis at his best in a vest, wading about knee-deep in dead terrorists. Nakatomi Plaza didn't know what hit it when it got between John McClane and his family Christmas dinner. C4 explosives, Steyr machine guns and a rocket launcher later, and a sequel was inevitable.

£2.49 / Amazon Instant Video, iTunes



FESTIVE FILM EXTRAS

Time to put your slippers on and ignore the suspicious burning smell coming from the kitchen...



CHRISTMAS JUMPER MUG

Movie marathons are no place for the incessant itching of a Christmas jumper. Luckily, this mug lets you continue to advertise your support for the festive season while reclining in the comfort of your non-yuletide hoodie. £8 / firebox.com



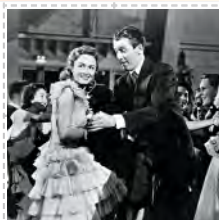
CAMBRIDGE AUDIO TV2

If your telly's audio is a bit thin and crispy, put this 'soundbase' on your list. It handles both film scores and dialogue with aplomb, and has Bluetooth so you can queue up your festive Spotify playlist as the credits roll. £200 / cambridgeaudio.com



JOE & SEPH'S MINCE PIE POPCORN JAR

This popcorn store stocks dozens of unique flavours, including 'cheese on toast' and 'vanilla cheesecake'. For this season, it has to be 'mince pie' brandy-infused fruit with an almond finish. £25 / joeandsephs.co.uk



It's A Wonderful Life (1946)

It's not easy turning a film about attempted suicide into a Yuletide family favourite, but Frank Capra did just that. When you leave all your presents behind, don't panic or you might be plagued – we mean, helped – by a well-meaning angel called Clarence. £2.49 / Amazon Instant Video, Google Play, iTunes



In Bruges (2008)

Everyone wants to be in Bruges at Christmas. Everyone except Ray (Colin Farrell). There's little festive spirit as Ray and fellow hitman Ken blunder through the darker recesses of the Venice of the North, but it's merrier than it sounds, with jokes aplenty. £2.49 / Amazon Instant Video, iTunes; £3.49 / Google Play



The Apartment (1960)

Bud, an insurance drone, loans his flat to his managers for their extramarital affairs in order to get a rise. The bad stuff hits the fan at the office Christmas party when he discovers the object of his own affections, Fran, is his boss's mistress. £2.49 / Amazon Instant Video, Google Play, iTunes



Eyes Wide Shut (1999)

Perhaps you favour a traditional Christmas. But we won't judge if you choose to spread your seasonal cheer at a quasi-religious sex orgy. With Tom Cruise. Like we said, we won't judge. Stanley Kubrick's directorial swansong is well worth a visit. £2.49 / Amazon Instant Video, Google Play, iTunes

6 INSTANT UPGRADES NEW YEAR'S EVE

You only need one annual event to keep the title of party king or queen – host an NYE bash that would put Andrew WK to shame with these fun-enablers



[Illustration: Jamie Sneedon]



1 MAGIMIX LE BLENDER

A special occasion calls for extra-special drinks. Don't just crack open another supermarket six pack: with this powerful 1200W blender you can whizz up perfect crushed ice and superbly blended cocktails in no time. Its 1.8L capacity means you can make large batches so you're not stuck being a barman for the whole night, and once everyone's had their fill of fruity booze, it'll do a fine line in soups and smoothies for your hungover New Year fitness kick.

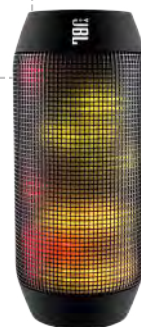
from £140 / johnlewis.com



2 PLATE ROULETTE

Raise the stakes as you raise a slice to the new year. Simply load up this Russian roulette-themed plate with cake, pizza or any other easily dividable snack and you've got a high-calorie, high-pressure game on your hands. It could decide who goes on a booze run or simply add a little spice to proceedings in that pivotal hour after midnight when guests may start to wander home. After all, what you choose as the forfeit for someone uncovering the loaded chamber is up to you...

£15 / red5.co.uk



3 JBL PULSE SPEAKER

Unless you're on your final warning with the neighbourhood watch, you'll need some serious tunes to get that party started. This Bluetooth speaker with quick NFC pairing comes with its very own programmable LED light show, so your guests will be able to see the beat as well as hear it. Two 40mm drivers and a custom-tuned bass port deliver the tunes, while there are five pre-programmed light themes and more available to download. Its battery is good for five hours, or up to ten with the lights off.

£160 / store.apple.com/uk



4 BEM KICKSTAND

Add some drama to the last seconds of 2014 by beaming the Big Ben countdown (or Jools Holland's *Hootenanny*) in jumbo-vision onto your wall. Bem's stylish projector is small, portable and easy to set up with its own remote control, a screen size of up to 90in and a resolution of 1280x800. It has built-in speakers as well as a 3.5mm output for connecting to the JBL speaker if you need to. Just hook it up to the TV feed from your PVR or laptop via HDMI and you're all ready to go.

US\$550 / bemwireless.com



5 ION PARTY BALL

Set the mood in lights without the need to rearrange the furniture to make room for your uncle's disco box. Ion's Party Ball simply plugs into an overhead/pendant light fitting, so it's perfectly positioned to project multicoloured light patterns across your walls with the minimum of fuss. Its LED lighting reacts to the beat, pulsating and rotating 360°. If you don't have a light fitting in the right place, fear not — it comes with an extension cord that can be used with a wall socket.

£50 / maplin.co.uk



6 EUROLITE CONFETTI MACHINE

If you're serious about the end-of-year countdown, this ceiling-mounted confetti spreader is the headline act you're looking for. The hopper holds a frankly ridiculous 3kg of confetti and the rotating wheel will rain colourful celebration-bits onto a whole roomful of alarmed but adoring partygoers. It'll take a bit of DIY to fix it securely to your ceiling, but your commitment to the party will be indisputable. Better yet, make it voice-activated: see the panel (right) for instructions.

£150 / dv247.com

COMMENCE CONFETTI...



SWITCH IT UP

With the help of a clever Belkin WeMo switch (£40, belkin.com), Siri and a little If This Then That (IFTTT) trickery, you can impress your buddies with your futuristic command of your home party setup...



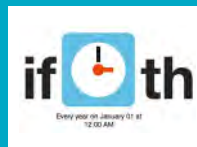
1. SET UP THE SWITCH

Sign up for an IFTTT account and activate the WeMo switch channel, following the instructions to allow remote access to your WeMo Switch. Add the IFTTT phone number to your contacts as "The Party Gods".



2. RECIPE TIME

Plug your confetti spreader into the WeMo switch and make sure it's switched on so that, when the WeMo switch gets the signal, the confetti will fly. Activate the IFTTT recipe (bit.ly/confettistorm) and you're ready to go.



3. SUMMON THE PARTY GODS

Just before midnight, fire up Siri and say: "Text The Party Gods and tell them it's time to make it rain" to start your confetti. If you want a backup plan, make a timer using IFTTT's 'Date & Time' channel.

GADGET DOCTOR



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google.com/+stufftv stuff@haymarket.com



MAIL OF THE MONTH

Q THE HUNT FOR THE MAGIC BOX

I use a jailbroken Apple TV 2 with XBMC Gotham to stream all my home media, but despite it being on a powerline network, I still get stuttering playback problems. I'm thinking about a Boxee, but they seem to have dropped off the face of the earth. All I want is

a box that plays my media and sits under the TV – what's your recommendation?

Simon Foster

A The Google Chromecast (£30, play.google.com) won't break the bank, yet you can plug it into your TV's HDMI input and be up and streaming

in minutes using the Plex media streaming app, available from the Play Store. It's also a great way to inject other services like Netflix and Google Play music into your TV, and it avoids living-room cabinet clutter too. Even if your TV doesn't have a USB port to power it, you can use a regular plug to juice it up. Happy watching.

Speak your brains and you could win a 6-month **QOBUZ HI-FI SUBSCRIPTION** worth £120. This letter wins 6 months of unlimited streaming in lossless-quality FLAC from Qobuz, worth £20/month

qobuz

Q PERFECT FIT

Hi doctor, I'm trying to get fitter to combat the effects of sitting in front of a screen all day. But I have no idea which fitness band or smartwatch to go for, there are so many out there now! Please help.

Helena Crawfield

A A noble cause, congrats. Maybe go for the Jawbone Up3 (£150, jawbone.com). Not only does it look stylish, but it records more than just steps and calories. It can measure your temperature and heart rate, in addition to REM sleep to see how well rested you are, before creating personalised goals to help you get fitter.

Q TAKE YOUR TABLET

My Mum's looking for an Android tablet with a big screen for easy reading, for around £200. I know that's not a

high-end price, but ideally we still want something that's fast and smooth without any slow-down. Any suggestions?

Adam Darowski

A There are so many Android tablets out there it's easy to get lost. After a bit of hunting, we reckon the Samsung Galaxy Tab 4 10.1 is the way to go. It's dropped down to £220 (expansys.com), and its quad-core insides, lovely big screen and lightweight build should tick all the right boxes.

Q SUPER STREAMING

I've got a nice old hi-fi I want to bring kicking and screaming into the 21st century. What would you recommend for streaming music from my computer? I don't want Spotify but I have a ton of ripped CDs.

Will Davison

A No need to drag your trusty system into the modern world by force. Just (gently) treat it to the QED uPlay Stream (£150, qed.co.uk), which will let you pump high-quality 24bit/96kHz tracks from your network-connected PC, straight to your hi-fi, and into your

ears. It's even got a dedicated app for iOS and Android.

Q JOINING THE DARK SIDE

Here's a conundrum for you, Stuff. My girlfriend's iPhone 4 is starting to die, so a replacement is in order. She is very much attached to the premium touchy-feely thing. Loves the glass and metal, and the weight. No interest in larger flagship phones. Not even an iPhone 5. So this is my chance to drag her over to Android. What are your thoughts?

Ced Newland

A Ah yes. Recruiting an Apple-ite into the Android camp – Cupertino's worst nightmare. The Sony Xperia Z3 Compact is the one you want. It's small but packs the full power of a flagship smartphone, with the latest quad-core insides and a 20.7MP camera. It's slathered in glass and – although the sides are plastic – it still feels solid rather than cheap.

Q NEW PAINT JOB

Hi Stuff, I've got an HTC Sensation and I really want to



customise its look. I have no idea where to begin, though.

Abu Mensah

A Apart from painting on speed stripes to make it run faster (results may vary), the easiest way to customise any Android is with a launcher. Nova (Efree, Play Store) supports custom icons, letting you totally revamp the look and feel of your homescreen and app menu. Throw in some snazzy animations and custom gestures (paid version), and the makeover will be complete.



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IF NOTHING ELSE, AT LEAST...

**...PRINT A
NEW FACE**

Whether you've been invited to a dog-themed New Year's party or just fancy looking like a Stormtrooper for the day, these home-made masks are here to help.

1. Go to wintercroft.com
and head to the 'shop' section. Here you'll find masks for every occasion, be it a beagle birthday bash or hare-themed heist.

2. Chosen your mask? You'll get a link to download the PDF, which can be printed on A4 paper or, if your printer allows, card that's ideally about the thickness of a cereal box.

3. Cut out the design, score along the lines and fix the edges together with invisible tape. Use acrylic car spray paint to decorate your mask, and attach a piece of elastic to keep it in place.



...MAKE A WORD CLOUD

And not just those retro tag clouds – this web app lets you make poster-worthy word art from virtually any source...

1. Choose the 'source' for your word cloud – it can be a website, a song or, if you're an egomaniac, your personal Twitter feed. Go to tagxedo.com and click 'create'.

2. In the Tagxedo Creator, click 'load' and either enter your source's URL or paste in the text you want word-clouded. Now fiddle with the colours, themes and shapes.

3. All done? Click 'save' to export it, or hit 'gift' to see your creation on various gift options, including a T-shirt, mug, card or even an apron (please don't give someone a word cloud apron).



...TURN YOUR HANDWRITING INTO A FONT

Tired of Times New Roman?
Had it with Helvetica? Time to make a personal font with this handy free site...

1. Head to fontfont.com and go to the 'selected characters' box. Choose the letters and symbols you want to be included in your font, then click 'create template'.

2. You'll be presented with a grid containing your chosen characters. Print this out, grab a Sharpie and fill out the template.

3. Now scan this sheet (or take a snap on your phone) and go to 'upload filled out templates'. You'll get a preview and a file of your font to install on your computer. Commence typing, possibly with a fresh resolve to improve your handwriting.



TUNE IN NEXT MONTH TO...

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WIN



WIN ONE OF 15 FITBIT CHARGE FITNESS TRACKERS WORTH £100

Just as 1346 was the year of the longbow, with thousands of English archers leaving the French in disarray at the Battle of Crécy, so 2014 has been – in rather less militaristic terms – the year of the fitness-tracking wristband. Even dogs are wearing them now, for heaven's sake – and dogs don't even have wrists!

If you're thinking it's about time you snagged yourself a slice of this healthy action, then you need to have a look at the new Charge from fitness-tracking specialists Fitbit. Available in the three colours seen above plus slate grey, and in three wrist sizes, this swanky little band delivers all-day activity tracking, real-time fitness stats and caller ID for incoming calls to your smartphone. It monitors steps taken, distance travelled, calories burned and floors climbed.

At £99.99 it comes in a whole penny under the £100 mark – but even that's £99.99 more than you'll pay if you're one of our 15 winners...

HOW TO ENTER

For a chance to win one of 15 fabulous fitness-following fancies, just jog your way over to **stuff.tv/win** and answer the following question:

WHERE'S THE BEST PLACE TO WEAR A FITBIT CHARGE?

- A** ... On your ear
- B** ... On your wrist
- C** ... Sellotaped to the rear bumper of your Twingo

Find out more at **fitbit.com/uk**

Terms & conditions 1 Open to UK residents aged 18 or over. 2 Entries close 11.59pm, 14 January 2015. 3 Prizes are as stated. 4 Prizes are non-transferable. 5 Only one entry per person. 6 For full Haymarket terms & conditions see www.stuff.tv/legal
Promoter: Haymarket Media Group, Teddington, Middx TW11 9BE

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 For full reviews of every product in the top 10s, visit stuff.tv/reviews

HOT BUY 1		Motorola Moto X After the Moto X, you won't want to go back to any other Android. It's smart, fast and beautifully crafted. Motorola's software works together seamlessly to make your life that bit easier and its brilliant Moto Maker means a personalised top-spec smartphone like never before. The Motorola feels like it's built for everyone, something made even sweeter by the price. It's no budget Moto G, but it is a reasonable £460 for the 32GB model. Who could say no to that?	STUFF SAYS The first truly gorgeous, seriously-specced Android phone that puts you in control – it's brilliant from £420 ★★★★★
2		LG G3 LG surprises us again. There's barely a single thing wrong with the G3... and so, so much that's right. Upgrades range from sleeker back buttons to the bigger, better 2K screen and laser-assisted camera. And it still lasts 15 hours. How do they do it?	£415 ★★★★★
3		Apple iPhone 6 With its slim, deeply attractive build and software overhaul, the iPhone 6 is the freshest-feeling iPhone in years. Its larger screen is big enough to be a useful improvement, with gorgeous colours, and this is Apple's best ever battery.	from £540 ★★★★★
NEW 4		Sony Xperia Z3 Compact This is, without a shadow of a doubt, the best sub-5in Android phone around. The power of a full-size flagship, an excellent camera and an impressive battery life are all crammed into a device that's a pleasure to use no matter the size of your digits. Impressive stuff.	£370 ★★★★★ BEST FOR DAINTY HANDS
5		HTC One M8 HTC's flagship phone has enough power to take it to the top of the AnTuTu benchmarks. It's a beaut to look at and to use, and it's even got a whole load of Lytro-style post-snap refocus features for photographic fun.	£480 ★★★★★ BEST FOR RAW POWER
NEW 6		Samsung Galaxy Note 4 Samsung was first at the phablet game, and with the Note 4 it's still the best. The ace camera, Multi Window feature and pressure-sensitive S Pen make proper use of the extra screen real estate. Plus, it has the longest battery life of any 2K phone we've tested.	£630 ★★★★★
7		Sony Xperia Z3 The refined Xperia Z3 is the phone the Z2 should have been and every bit as good as that sounds. It's sleeker and easier to hold, but with the same stunning screen, camera and hi-res audio. Not to mention the incredible battery life. PS4 Remote Play is due soon.	£490 ★★★★★
8		OnePlus One Believe the hype. To get one of the best smartphones on the planet, you don't need £500 or £40 a month any more. You just need an invite. In terms of design, performance, screen and battery life you simply can't get better than this for anywhere near £300.	from £230 ★★★★★ BEST FOR VALUE FOR MONEY
9		Samsung Galaxy S5 Big, bold and stuffed with tech, the Galaxy S5 is a bona fide superphone that will delight Samsung fans, although it has some very stiff competition. It has a faster processor, a slightly bigger screen and a more solid (if not quite stylish) feel than the S4.	£440 ★★★★★
10		Motorola Moto G Google sprinkled some magical Nexus dust over this Motorola blower: the Moto G costs a mere £140 yet has a distinctly non-budget 4.5in 720p screen and quad-core processor. Paltry storage and poor camera count against it – but then again: £140!	from £140 ★★★★★

● Prices quoted are for handset only unless otherwise stated

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HOT BUY NEW 1	 Apple iPad Air 2 The iPad Air didn't really need to be thinner, but that doesn't mean 6.1mm isn't mighty impressive. This combines with reassuring weight and impeccable build quality to make this the most desirable tab on the planet. While the display is the same Retina resolution as before, clever screen tech brings the pixels closer to the surface, and the whole experience is even faster than before thanks to the new A8X chip. Basically it's the best tablet in the world made even better.	STUFF SAYS Thinner, lighter and mightier: Apple's iron-fisted reign at the top of the tablet charts continues unabated from £400 ★★★★★
2	 Apple iPad Mini 2 With Retina Display The iPad Mini 3 is out now but all it adds is Touch ID. The good news is that the Mini 2 is now down to £240, which is frankly bargain-tastic. That's why the 'old' model stays in our Top 10 – if you're after a mini-tablet of real quality, your choice has just got easier.	from £240 ★★★★★
3	 Samsung Galaxy Tab S 10.5 Samsung has blessed the Galaxy Tab with one of the best tablet screens we've ever laid eyes on, plus an impressive camera and some incredible stamina – but there are performance niggles and Apple's tablet app selection is still far superior.	£360 ★★★★★ BEST FOR MAGAZINES AND MOVIES
4	 Samsung Galaxy Tab S 8.4 Superb screen, unique features... really, there's very little that's missing here. For us the iPad Mini beats the smaller Samsung by a whisker for its design, performance and wider selection of optimised apps, but against other Android tabs it's a winner.	£250 ★★★★★
5	 Google Nexus 7 The Nexus has moved further ahead of the Android pack by virtue of getting an update to OS 4.4 KitKat. It's now smoother, faster and more battery-friendly than ever, while its 323ppi 1080p screen and quad-core power still impress.	from £170 ★★★★★ BEST FOR VALUE AND PERFORMANCE
6	 Microsoft Surface Pro 3 At last, Microsoft has delivered on the promise of the tablet-cum-laptop hybrid. It proves there's space in the world for a design that's more productive than an iPad or Galaxy Note, but easier to hump around than a traditional laptop.	from £640 ★★★★★ BEST FOR WORKING ANYWHERE
7	 Asus Transformer Pad Transformers have always been more about laptop replacement than tableteering, and this one is the laptoppiest yet. A 2560x1600 screen, two-day battery life (with keyboard dock) and quad-core Tegra processor all work Android up into a frenzy.	£200 ★★★★★
8	 Amazon Kindle Fire HDX 7 The Fire HDX presents a sanitised version of Android cloaked in a user-friendly Amazon skin. There's even a 'Mayday' button for instant video help. A great build, fast processor and stunning screen round off a package that'll appeal to families and less techy types.	from £200 ★★★★★
9	 Asus Transformer Book T100 This 10.1in tab-and-dock combo has enough grunt to run full Win 8.1 thanks to Intel's new Baytrail CPU. The 1366x768 screen is a good 'un, with crisp text, great contrast and colours that pop, while dual-band Wi-Fi and a day-long battery are also welcome.	from £280 ★★★★★
10	 Nvidia Shield Tablet This really is the ultimate gaming tablet. The Shield's sheer power and gaming smarts are incredible, with a console-quality controller and the option of seamless streaming from your PC. All it needs now is more made-for-Shield games... lots more.	£240 ★★★★★☆ BEST FOR GAMING ON THE GO

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HOT BUY	1		Sonos multiroom system Who needs to drill holes and re-plaster walls to get a multiroom music system? Not you. With the addition of the cracking little Play:1 (£170) Sonos has made it easier than ever to start spreading your tunes around. Then maybe hook up a Connect to your existing hi-fi and router, and add speakers to a Connect:Amp in another room, or a SUB for a bass boost. You'll run out of rooms before you run out of options. For a further upgrade, the Arcam rSeries SonLink DAC works a treat with the Connect.	STUFF SAYS Infinite music in every room without the need for custom installers? Sign us up now, please from £340 ★★★★★
NEW	2		Naim Mu-so £895 for a wireless speaker?! Well yes, but what a wireless speaker it is. Naim has ploughed all of its high-end hi-fi experience into delivering a beautifully made, great-sounding device with AirPlay, Spotify Connect and aptX Bluetooth all on-board.	£895 ★★★★★ BEST FOR ONE-BOX WI-FI HI-FI
NEW	3		Monitor Audio Airstream S200 It may look a bit like a floppy skyscraper, but the Monitor Audio's Bluetooth-plus-AirPlay speaker makes a lot of sense, mostly because it takes up very little shelf/desk/table space but makes loads of lovely noise. It's a bit of a steal at £200.	£200 ★★★★★
NEW	4		Cambridge Audio Go There are loads of very cheap Bluetooth speakers out there, but we reckon it's worth spending that little bit more to get something that's really good – and that's the Go. It sounds awesome, it's really nicely built and its battery lasts a massive 18 hours.	£120 ★★★★★ BEST FOR PICNIC PARTIES
NEW	5		Bluesound multiroom System Fancy a bit of Sonos-style multiroom but with better-than-CD-quality sound thrown in? You want a Bluesound. There are all-in-one speakers, adapters for your existing hi-fi, and a Vault that rips and stores all your CDs. All can handle high-resolution audio.	from £400 ★★★★★
	6		Audio Pro Addon T10 Available in orange, white or black, the Addon T10 is a Bluetooth speaker that also has analogue inputs and a USB socket for charging your MP3 player. Sound-wise it's punchy and deep, with just a little too much bass. It sounds best in orange, obviously.	£280 ★★★★★
	7		Libratone Zipp A fuzzy, cylindrical, colourful AirPlay dock that will deliver detailed, punchy 360° sound anywhere at all, thanks to a built-in battery that gives it four hours of outdoor life. Direct Wi-Fi skills free you from cables, routers and everything but the boogie.	£270 ★★★★★ BEST FOR AL FRESCO PARTIES
NEW	8		Cambridge Audio Minx Xi It might not look all that fancy, but the Minx Xi is like that micro system you had at uni, only it gobbles internet music rather than Rage Against The Machine CDs. Just add a pair of quality speakers (try Wharfedale Diamond 220s) and you've got a great hi-fi.	£450 ★★★★★
	9		Q Acoustics BT3 These ultra-versatile Bluetooth speakers have an optical input for waking up the audio of your flatscreen TV. The styling is simple and so is the sound – brilliantly so, with perfect hi-fi balance and an impressive focus to the stereo image.	£350 ★★★★★
	10		Sony NWZ-ZX1 The latest Walkman is a premium high-res audio player, and it's the best-sounding portable device we've ever heard: you'll notice parts of songs you never knew were there. We're not so keen on the high price and lack of expandable storage, though.	£540 ★★★★★☆

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SONY

S90 SERIES • CURVED 4K UHD TV

4K

The new S90 is Sony's first ever range of curved TVs. Available in two screen sizes: 65in and 75in, the S90 series boasts 4K Ultra HD resolution. Features and specifications include Sony's 4K X-Reality PRO picture engine, Triluminos colour technology, Motionflow XR800Hz, edge-lit LED backlighting, active 3D and a detachable Skype camera. Sound is provided by Sony's new 4.2-channel multi-angle live speaker system which allows for "expansive, uncompromised 360-degree surround sound". Other features include Sony's Social Viewing for watching with friends over Skype, Live Football Mode, One-touch mirroring and Photo share.

Prices from £3899

NAD M12 / M22

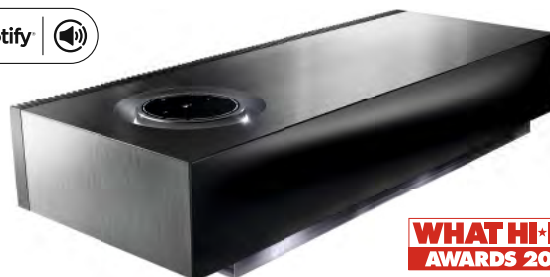
DIGITAL PREAMPLIFIER / DAC / POWER AMPLIFIER

The M12 is an ultra-high resolution digital audio hub that boasts a full roster of audiophile-grade features that leverage some of the most advanced digital audio thinking on earth. Employing the latest generation of digital PowerDrive™ the M22 offers a minimum of 250W per channel with amazing reserves of dynamic power at lower impedances.

£5998



NEW



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HOT
BUY

1

**AKG K451**

They've actually been around a little while now, but what put the K451 on-ears back on to our radar was an official price drop from £130 to £80, and a real-world price of just £55 or less. For that money they're unbeatable – awesomely agile and punchy sound wrapped up in a subtly stylish and foldable design. Add both standard and three-button control cables for maximising compatibility and there's practically no excuse for not getting brilliant sound from your phone.

STUFF SAYS

Fantastic sound and great portability at an almost unbeatable price: the perfect PMP upgrade

£50 ★★★★★

NEW

2

**Philips Fidelio M1 MkII**

Your commute deserves a quality soundtrack, and second-generation Fidelio M1 headphones give you precisely that. There's oodles of detail to the sound and they punch harder than the Hulk. Beats and their ilk can't touch them.

£180

★★★★★

NEW

3

**SoundMagic E10S**

This is actually the third version of SoundMagic's awesome, affordable in-ears – not that you'd tell by looking. They sound even better, though: a little smoother and more refined, with tight, weighty bass. Plus there's now a mic and button for smartphone use.

£30

★★★★★

NEW

4

**Sony MDR-EX650AP**

If you're prepared to pay a little extra for your in-ears, these Sonys are even better than the SoundMagics above. The sound is that bit bigger, a little more detailed and a little more grown-up, and if you don't like the brass finish there's a silver version.

£60

★★★★★

NEW

5

**Bose QuietComfort 25**

The best kind of silence is the kind you then fill with sweet, sweet music, and that's what the QuietComfort 25s give you. The active noise-cancelling quells office hubbub, air-conditioning and aeroplane hum, and delivers cracking sound in its place.

£270

★★★★★

**BEST FOR
SHUTTING OUT
THE WORLD**

6

**Philips Fidelio M1BT**

There's a comprehensive set of controls, while the dark blue-grey design is nicely understated – no Bose-esque sticky-out Bluetooth modules here. Cut the cords with style and substance: these are the best Bluetooth headphones around.

£155

★★★★★

**BEST FOR
GREAT SOUND
WITH NO WIRES**

NEW

7

**AKG Y50**

The bright colour options (they're available in yellow, teal and red, as well as black) and massive logo have a slight try-hard feel about them, but the Y50s make up for it by sounding loads better than the more 'street' on-ear headphones out there.

£80

★★★★★

8

**Sol Republic Master Tracks**

Really tough things are usually really ugly, which is why the lovely styling of the "virtually indestructible" Master Tracks headphones is so refreshing. Loud, punchy, fast and controlled, the sound is just as attractive as the design. Worth every penny.

£100

★★★★★

9

**Sennheiser Momentum**

Classily styled, cushion-comfortable and smooth-sounding, the Momentums are the perfect over-ears for the dapper man about town. There's also an on-ear version, smaller and cheaper at £130, available in pink, blue, green, brown and, um, 'ivory'.

£200

★★★★★

10

**PSB M4U2**

Yes, the M4U2s have got great noise-cancelling, but that's only half the story. Using the built-in amp produces a sound that's almost unbelievably punchy, clean and exciting. They might be a bit heavy, but that audio quality really is worth the weight.

£300

★★★★★

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5. Headphones: **AKG Y50**



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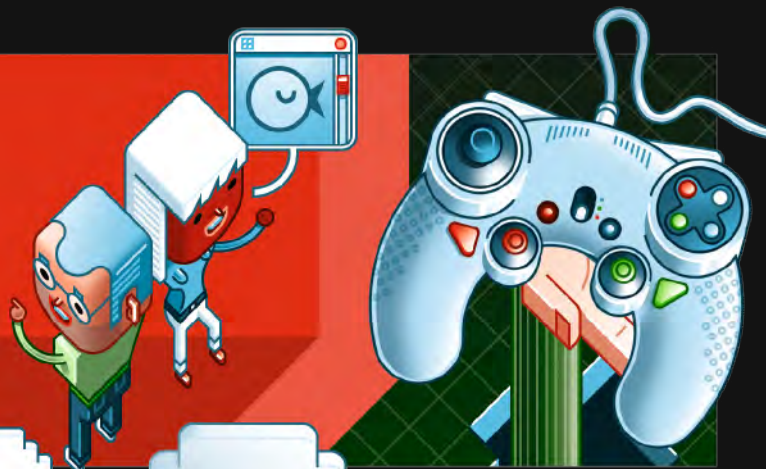
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HOT BUY	1	 <p>Sky+HD The new Sky boxes come with built-in Wi-Fi, to make it easier to access on-demand programming, of which there's now more than ever, including pre-release blockbuster films. There's now a 2TB drive available that, with more than 65 channels of HD, might well be worth the outlay. On the move, the Sky Go app is supremely slick. But the most important thing is this: Sky has more movie, TV and sport content – and more of it is unique – than any other service.</p>	<p>STUFF SAYS The only choice for serious TV, movie or sport addicts</p> <p>from £free + £21.50/month</p> <p>★★★★★</p>	
NEW	2	 <p>Sony BDV-N5200 A whole (home) cinema (minus a telly) in one box? That's the Sony BDV-N5200. A Netflix-toting Blu-ray player, an amplifier, five speakers and a subwoofer, all for a lot less than an iPhone 6. There's even a wireless adapter for the rear speakers.</p>	<p>£400</p> <p>★★★★★</p>	
	3	 <p>Sonos Playbar A characteristically Sonos take on the soundbar, the Playbar hooks up to your TV via its single optical input and fills your room with a big, detailed sound. And as with all Sonos kit, it can stream your own music files, Spotify and more as part of a multiroom system.</p>	<p>£600</p> <p>★★★★★</p>	BEST FOR STREAMING MUSIC
NEW	4	 <p>Sony BDP-S7200 Sure, you can pick up a Blu-ray player for just £50 these days, but if you're serious about your movies then you want to make sure they look and sound crisper than a Kettle Chip. That's where the S7200 comes in. It even throws Netflix and iPlayer into the bargain.</p>	<p>£150</p> <p>★★★★★</p>	
NEW	5	 <p>Yamaha YSP-2500 If your only requirement for a soundbar is that it should sound better than your telly, almost any will do; but if you want one that will fool your ears into thinking they're surrounded by actual speakers, you want the amazingly clever Yamaha YSP-2500.</p>	<p>£700</p> <p>★★★★★</p>	
	6	 <p>Virgin TiVo Hardware-wise, the taste-learning TiVo is a Sky+HD-beater, but it loses out on content. Mind you, subscribers to the 'XL' package now have free access to all the BT Sport channels: Premier League football, MotoGP and more, in lovely HD.</p>	<p>from £free + £24/month</p> <p>★★★★★</p>	
NEW	7	 <p>BenQ W1400 What's better than <i>Inception</i> on a 300in screen, that's what. How do you get a 300in screen in your house? You buy the BenQ W1400. If your lounge isn't quite that big it can also project an 84in image from just 2m away. Try finding an 84in TV for £1000.</p>	<p>£1000</p> <p>★★★★★</p>	
NEW	8	 <p>Panasonic DMP-BDT700 The BDT700 is the Blu-ray player for the most serious of serious home cinema buffs. It's all high-end materials, sound-enhancing dampening and 4K-upscaling video circuits. But yeah, it'll also stream <i>Vampire Diaries</i> from Netflix if that's more your kind of thing.</p>	<p>£500</p> <p>★★★★★</p>	
	9	 <p>Humax DTR-T1010 YouView Delivering free-to-air TV with the convenience of Sky or TiVo, the Humax lets you browse the last week's catch-up TV direct from the EPG or record your own on its HDD. The iOS / Android app's remote record is handy, and it's all without a costly subscription.</p>	<p>from £180 (500GB)</p> <p>★★★★★</p>	
NEW	10	 <p>Sony BDP-S5200 There's no display, it looks a bit cheap and its remote is a bit naff, but this dinky Blu-ray player offers a lot of bang for very few bucks. For the money you get a very good picture, 3D (if you're still into that), Wi-Fi and plenty of on-demand apps. Bargain.</p>	<p>£90</p> <p>★★★★★</p>	

FOR OUR COMPLETE HOME CINEMA TOP 10 LISTS, POINT YOUR CLICKER AT STUFF.TV/TOP-10S

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HOT BUY	1		Samsung UE55HU7500 Finally, a 4K TV that can be recommended without hesitation. Not only does it play the limited amount of 4K material on Netflix with eye-moistening beauty, it's actually just as good as a full HD TV when playing 1080p stuff, and that wasn't the case with last year's models. Chuck in all of Samsung's usual smart TV whizzbang, remove the silly motion-sensing controls and knock the price to something that wouldn't make a city banker blush, and you've got 2014's star TV.	STUFF SAYS Embrace the 4K future while still getting the best of your current Blu-rays and TV: it's the proverbial win-win £1900 ★★★★★
	2		Sony KDL-50W829B 4K a bit too new-fangled (or pricey) for you? How about a 50in edge-lit LED LCD with all of Sony's smart features for well under a grand? It's not even like picture quality's been sacrificed – this is an absolute corker of a telly in every way.	£785 ★★★★★ BEST FOR AFFORDABLE BRILLIANCE
	3		Samsung UE46F7000 The 46in F7000 might just be the sweetest spot in Samsung's current range – the same spectacular performance as the F8000 series but without the show-off design. Great picture quality and slick online functionality in one box.	£1550 ★★★★★
NEW	4		Sony KD-65S9005B The best curved TV we've tested is actually the least curved TV we've tested (not counting the actual flat ones, of course). How much difference the curve makes is hard to tell, but what we can say is this is an awesome-performing 65in 4K TV.	£3900 ★★★★★
NEW	5		Sony KDL-32W706B There's nothing wrong with sticking with a smaller TV, but you should still make sure you pick a good 'un. This 32in Sony is the best, in terms of both picture performance and features, which include 1080p resolution and all the smart stuff you can handle.	£390 ★★★★★ BEST FOR A SMALLER SCREEN
	6		Sony KD-55X8505B If you want to jump on the 4K bandwagon with Sony you could go for the wedge-shaped X9, which is great, but we'd suggest that this slimmer, less intrusive 'entry-level' 55-incher is an even better buy. It's still got all the smart stuff and great performance.	£1800 ★★★★★
NEW	7		LG 42LB700V The performance is very good, but what makes this 42in LG really special is its webOS user interface, which treats all sources, apps, recordings and live broadcasts equally, getting you to the content you want to watch quicker. And isn't that what a TV is for?	£550 ★★★★★☆
	8		Panasonic TX-42AS500B It's not the prettiest, it's not the smartest, and with just two HDMI inputs it's not the most connected TV about, but there's a really simple, intuitive OS pulling the strings here – and a performance that's very strong given the price and 42in size.	£350 ★★★★★☆
	9		LG 55UB950V LG's 4K flagship looks gorgeous with Netflix's 4K content... but as with the other LG telly above, the real story here is the webOS interface. This 55in set is by far the most pleasant, colourful, multi-task-friendly and downright fun TV there's ever been.	£1600 ★★★★★☆ BEST FOR MAKING TV FUN AGAIN
	10		Sony KDL-55W955 With excellent colours and motion this is a very respectable 55in screen – albeit lacking in wow factor – but Sony's 'wedge' design gives greater internal volume, making this the one to go for if you really can't have external speakers.	£1250 ★★★★★☆

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HOT BUY	1		Apple MacBook Air 13in (2014) The 2014 MacBook Air update means, once again, our favourite old laptop is now our favourite new laptop. Nothing's changed on the outside, and under the skin there's just a slight processor boost from 1.3GHz to 1.4GHz, but combined with a price cut of £100 on each model we're still happy with that. The very top model, which comes with a 256GB SSD, is now just under a grand, too. Head to stuff.tv for our full reviews of both 13in and 11in versions.	STUFF SAYS It's not a major upgrade, but Apple has improved the Air's already awesome spec and lopped £100 off the price from £750 ★★★★★
	2		Apple MacBook Pro with Retina Display 13in (2014) Choosing between Air and Pro is getting harder. Both now run on Haswell chips, but the Pro is faster, with a 2014 processor boost. There's a 4K-capable Thunderbolt 2 port, and then that Retina screen, one of the most gorgeous you'll see. Tough call.	from £1000 ★★★★★ BEST FOR EVERYTHING BAR THE PRICE
	3		Microsoft Surface Pro 3 The fact that it's the only device to feature in two of our Top Tens is a testament to the Surface Pro's versatility: it's a strong tablet, but its full-fat operating system and powerful innards mean it's also a worthy adversary to Ultrabooks and MacBooks.	from £850 (with Type Cover) ★★★★★ BEST FOR WORKING ANYWHERE
NEW	4		Dell Chromebook 11 Well-built, tough and powerful: Dell has delivered pretty much all you could want from a wallet-friendly Chromebook. Its high-quality finish, solid keyboard and responsive trackpad feel premium and it's a runaway success in our benchmarks.	£215 ★★★★★ BEST FOR VALUE FOR MONEY
	5		Alienware 17 A brute of a machine in every way, the Alienware 17 weighs as much as four MacBook Airs and probably frags harder than 10 of them. Core i7 Haswell processor at 3.4GHz, Nvidia GeForce graphics, up to 32GB of RAM... our trigger finger's already itching.	from £1500 ★★★★★
NEW	6		Lenovo Yoga Pro 3 The third entry in the Yoga Pro line refines the laptop/tablet hybrid design with a power-sipping new Intel Core M processor plus slimness and style to make even the MacBook Air look worried. And you can stand it up like a tent. If you want.	£1300 ★★★★★☆
NEW	7		Asus C200 The holy grail of laptop battery life is 10 hours, and Asus's C200 Chromebook misses it by 17 minutes. That's as good as we've seen from a MacBook Air costing five times as much. There are more powerful Chromebooks, but this one just keeps on going.	£200 ★★★★★☆
	8		Acer Aspire S7 The Aspire S7 is almost the perfect Ultrabook – it matches the MacBook Air for weight, beats it for slimness by 6mm, and has a gorgeous 1920x1080 touch-friendly screen. Only its battery, which lasted a mere 5hrs on test, prevents it getting that fifth star.	£775 ★★★★★☆
NEW	9		Toshiba CB30-102 Although this Chromebook only includes 2GB of memory, it wowed us with its incredible performance. It's able to juggle the web's most demanding sites without any lag or stuttering and its appealing larger screen makes it well suited for media.	£220 ★★★★★☆
	10		Acer Aspire Switch 10 A Windows laptop and 10.1-inch tablet for just £300? This seriously flexible bundle is Asus's best hybrid yet. Only a bit heavier than a MacBook Air, the square-edged ergonomics and battery life are issues, but as a whole package it makes a lot of sense.	£280 ★★★★★☆

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THIS
MONTH
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2006



Sennheiser RS 130
 £100
Stuff said Wireless witchcraft comes to headphone land. Impressed with how the transmitter flashes if the source is too loud or too quiet, we were thoroughly sold by the easily adjustable on-ear tuning and volume controls. And they're a good fit.
 ★★★★★



02 XDA Exec
 £150
Stuff said A true-mini laptop, the XDA Exec is a business weapon. It'll cheerfully connect to anything over Wi-Fi, 3G, Bluetooth or infrared, and Internet Explorer ably displays image-heavy pages such as BBC News – just watch those skyrocketing 3G bills, though.
 ★★★★★



Sonos Digital Music System
 from £850
Stuff said The Sonos is so simple it could give wireless multiroom systems a good name. It's both an amplifier and a wireless distribution hub, so slap it in the living room, link it to your PC, hook up a pair of stereo speakers and you're off.
 ★★★★★☆



Jabra BT500
 £75
Stuff said This is one "U.G.L.Y. you ain't got no alibi" headset – but wait, Jabra's wraparound design is by far the most comfortable for an extended catch-up with your Auntie Maureen – plus the MiniGet earpiece is easy on the lugholes and sounds great.
 ★★★★★

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HOME COMPUTERS

HOT BUY	1		Apple iMac Other than regular power upgrades and a bit of slimming, the iMac has been largely unchanged for a while, but it does now run Apple's lovely Yosemite OS. There's also now a more affordable version and an eye-wateringly expensive 4K model.	from £900 ★★★★★	BEST FOR ALL-ROUND BRILLIANCE
	2		Sapphire Edge VS8 This mini-PC may look like the Terminator's lunchbox, but it houses AMD's 1.6GHz A8 APU and dedicated HD7600G graphics with 4GB of RAM. A capable little fellow, the VS8 even does a decent job with the latest gaming titles (with the detail dialled back a little).	from £330 ★★★★★	BEST FOR COMPACT POWER
	3		Alienware X51 (2014) The X51 hasn't changed a huge amount, but the wee size matched with powerful components make it perfectly suited to HD gaming. Steam Machines are going to liven this market up but right now it's the best balance of power and form in PC land.	from £800 ★★★★★	
NEW	4		Raspberry Pi Model B+ It's a fully functioning PC that's barely bigger than a credit card, and now it's a little more flexible than before thanks to two extra USB ports and better power management. Don't expect a 'proper' computer – this is for tinkerers after a fun new project.	from £25 ★★★★☆	
NEW	5		Zotac ZBOX Sphere OI520 About the size and shape of a cannonball or cantaloupe, this striking sphere will certainly draw attention. For media playback it's perfect, but high-end gaming is a no-go due to low frame rates. However, even in full swing it barely raises a decibel.	£280 ★★★★☆	

GAMES CONSOLES

HOT BUY	1		Sony PlayStation 4 It may not quite be the finished article, but this is the best games machine on the planet. It has whisper-quiet operation, a sleek form and bags of power, with full 1080p on all titles and not a whiff of lag. When proper media streaming arrives, it'll be unstoppable.	from £310 ★★★★★	
	2		Microsoft Xbox One This is very different to the Xbox One of 2013. Most significantly, the unpopular Kinect feature is now out of the deal, allowing Microsoft to drop the price and releasing enough extra power for developers to make their games look and play better.	£330 ★★★★★	
	3		Microsoft Xbox 360 Yes, it's been succeeded by the One, but the years have been kind to the 360. With an amazing catalogue of recent games that use its full potential, brilliant media streaming skills and a low, low price it's impossible not to recommend it to cash-strapped gamers.	from £170 ★★★★★	BEST FOR BUDGET GAMING
	4		Sony PlayStation 3 The PS3 has been around a while but, like the Xbox 360, that just means it has plenty of great games. Online gaming via PlayStation Network is still brilliant and still free (it's £40/yr for PS4), and it's worth buying for its Blu-ray and media streaming alone.	from £150 ★★★★★	
	5		Nintendo 3DS XL The 3D effect may be a gimmick that hasn't paid off, but put that to one side and the 3DS is still the king of the portable games machines. The XL is the biggest version yet, and there's now a massive catalogue of inventive dual-screen games to play.	£180 ★★★★☆	

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4000mAh



2.1A
High Efficiency



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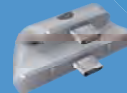
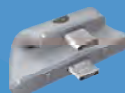
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4000mAh

2.1A High Efficiency. Charge On!

<div>HOT BUY</div> <div>1</div>		<div>Pebble Steel</div> <div>Unveiled at CES 2014, the Steel keeps the straightforward looks, crisp display and five-day battery life that helped the standard Pebble win our hearts. But it holds more RAM, apps and customisable faces this time, and swaps the plastic for either a 'Steel' silver or matte black stylish suit, making it look and feel more like an actual watch. The Steel goes beyond the gimmicks and into the world of real-world wearable tech. Pop it on your wristwear wish-list.</div>	<div>STUFF SAYS</div> <div>The best smartwatch money can buy... and the original plastic Pebble is still available for £50 less</div> <div>from £180 ★★★★★</div>	
<div>2</div>		<div>Fitbit Flex</div> <div>The Flex delivers all of Fitbit's activity-tracking smarts but in a form factor that's less fiddly than its belt-clip counterparts. It's packed with Bluetooth, NFC, vibratamotor and an LED display. See also the new Fitbit Charge, with a full display, for £30 more.</div>	<div>from £70</div> <div>★★★★★</div>	<div>BEST FOR TRACKING YOUR LIFE</div>
<div>3</div>		<div>Jawbone UP24</div> <div>Now with Bluetooth for hassle-free syncing, the stylish UP24 is worth the extra £25 over the Jawbone Up. The app introduces new challenges and tracks your sleep patterns. It will also gently nudge you, if you're lazing around, to get back on the move.</div>	<div>£95</div> <div>★★★★★</div>	
<div>4</div>		<div>Motorola Moto 360</div> <div>With its iconic, head-turning design, this could be the first wearable you will want to wear. The Moto 360's our favourite and most comfortable Android Wear watch so far, but the battery might make you anxious and it's a few specs short of brilliance.</div>	<div>£200</div> <div>★★★★★</div>	
<div>5</div>		<div>Philips Hue</div> <div>Pair these smart LED bulbs with 'recipes' on ifttt.com – set them to change colour with the weather or when it's time to run to the train. They also tie in with Philips' own Ambilight TVs, casting the colours from the screen across your entire room..</div>	<div>from £45</div> <div>★★★★☆</div>	
<div>6</div>		<div>Roku Streaming Stick</div> <div>'Streaming Stick' tells you all you need to know, really: this is a stick, and it streams. It streams plenty, too – Netflix, iPlayer, Spotify, Sky Now and Sky Go to name a few. And unlike Chromecast, it's also a dab hand with your own video and music files. Lovely stuff.</div>	<div>£50</div> <div>★★★★☆</div>	
<div>NEW</div> <div>7</div>		<div>LG G Watch R</div> <div>This circular smartwatch won't win any beauty contests, but that's about its only flaw. The G Watch R's plastic OLED screen has deep blacks, sharp text and good visibility. Its battery easily lasts a day and a half, and using it is a smooth experience.</div>	<div>£225</div> <div>★★★★☆</div>	
<div>8</div>		<div>Google Chromecast</div> <div>This USB memory-stick-sized cord-cutter is compatible with Netflix, YouTube, Google Play movies and BBC iPlayer: a cheap, simple way of getting web-sourced movies and shows onto your living-room TV.</div>	<div>£30</div> <div>★★★★☆</div>	
<div>9</div>		<div>Samsung Gear Live</div> <div>Could it be fourth time lucky for Android Wear? A waterproof 1.63in Super AMOLED screen, a resting heart monitor and a growing selection of apps all say yes. Its pitiful one-day battery life lets it down, though.</div>	<div>£170</div> <div>★★★★☆</div>	
<div>10</div>		<div>TomTom Multi-Sport Cardio</div> <div>The new version of the TomTom Multi-Sport adds an impressively accurate heart-rate sensor to an already strong formula, allowing for more focused and personal training. It'll track runs, cycles and swims, and the companion app is also much improved.</div>	<div>£250</div> <div>★★★★☆</div>	<div>BEST FOR TRIATHLETES IN TRAINING</div>

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SLRs

HOT BUY	1		Olympus OM-D E-M1 The Olympus flagship is armed with the same excellent 16.3MP sensor as its predecessor the E-M5, but has an improved autofocus system, a startlingly good electronic viewfinder and masses of direct controls. Also look out for the E-M10.	£800 (body only) ★★★★★	
	2		Canon EOS 700D Look, it's a new Canon at No2. No, wait, it's the old one. Actually, it's kind of both. The 700D is a minor upgrade over the 650D, keeping its 18MP sensor, flip-out touchscreen and autofocus during video and adding little beyond a new kit lens. Still great, though.	£350 (body only) ★★★★★	BEST FOR ALL-ROUND VALUE
	3		Sony A6000 Sony's new system camera may be tiny but it packs a big photographic punch. There may be no optical image stabilisation but the incredible speed and accuracy of the A6000's autofocus is a real highlight, as is its large, clear electronic viewfinder.	£420 (body only) ★★★★★	
	4		Nikon D810 The top-end Nikon D810 is a monster camera. Its image quality and performance are hard to fault – if you're a serious photographer willing to stump up the cash then it's a fantastic buy. However, there are some features missing, such as 4K video and Wi-Fi.	£2100 (body only) ★★★★★	
	5		Sony A7R We love this camera. It's light weight but tough and delivers results that outstrip pretty much any other compact system camera on the market. It has a huge full-frame 36.4MP sensor and noise-suppression. Your wallet might weep, but your photo album will sing.	£1250 (body only) ★★★★★	

COMPACT CAMERAS

HOT BUY	1		Sony DSC-HX60 2014's HX60 isn't a huge departure from its predecessor in terms of its build quality, ease of use, specifications and 30x zoom lens – all of which are excellent. What it does add is NFC and a newer Bionz X processor, making it a slightly nippier performer.	£255 ★★★★★	
	2		Sony DSC-RX100 III If you're looking for the best tiny snapper around, this is it. Excellent image quality, fast autofocus, a useful electronic viewfinder and professional video recording, all squeezed into a truly teeny package that'll fit into your jeans pocket. We're smitten.	£550 ★★★★★	
	3		Fujifilm FinePix X100S Fujifilm's souped up its fixed-lens retro shooter, with faster focusing and a big APS-C sensor. It's not all new, though, keeping the 35mm-equivalent f/2 lens and hybrid viewfinder from the X100. A less retro version with black finish is now available too.	£660 ★★★★★	
	4		Canon PowerShot G16 The G16 packs a lot into its sturdy body: optical viewfinder, loads of manual controls and an f1.8-2.8, 28-140mm (equivalent) zoom lens. Upgrades over the G15 include Wi-Fi and faster burst shooting of up to 12fps, while image quality is as good as ever.	£300 ★★★★★	
	5		Nikon Coolpix AW120 The ultimate rugged camera: almost indestructible, and fit for temperatures as low as -10°C, it will even survive a rinse cycle in your dishwasher. The AW120 also takes lovely pictures and impressive video in both good lighting and dimmer conditions.	£220 ★★★★★	BEST FOR EXTREME EXPLOITS



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MISSED...
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BOOKS

**Toshiba CB30-102**

£220 / toshiba.co.uk

Where Toshiba wins is in terms of performance. We're not sure how, but it's able to juggle the web's most demanding sites without any lag. The larger form factor also means Toshiba can insert a bigger battery, which gives us a decent six and a half hours.

★★★★☆

**Lenovo N20p**

£245 / lenovo.com/uk

While lying flat is its forte, the N20p also falls flat in the areas that are most needed. It seems that adding a touchscreen has increased the drain on the processor, and the Lenovo cannot keep up with multiple tabs open. The keyboard also feels cheap and nasty.

★★★★☆

**Asus C200**

£200 / asus.com/uk

Ten hours: it's the holy grail of laptop battery life, and the C200 misses it by just 17 minutes. Unfortunately this incredible stamina comes at a price – performance. It packs the latest Intel Bay Trail processor, but when compared to others, cracks start to show.

★★★★☆

**Dell Chromebook 11**

£240 / dell.co.uk

It's in a league of its own – not just among Chromebooks, but among all laptops. The solid keyboard and responsive trackpad feel like they've come from a laptop that costs three times as much. It's a runaway success in our benchmarks too: an absolute bargain.

★★★★★

Your website is almost certainly making these **7 BIG MISTAKES** which could be **COSTING YOU A FORTUNE** – If your website is not as profitable as it should be, you are about to find out why...

Attention Business Owners

Is Your Website Destroying Your Business?

If you are a Business Owner and you're frustrated at the profitability of your website and internet marketing, you are not alone. Here are some of the big, costly myths about getting customers online:

THE MYTH: Build a good website and the customers will come. If you spend lots of money on a nice website with good-looking design and lots of content – the sales will follow.

THE TRUTH: Nice idea. The only problem is, it doesn't work. The harsh truth is that the design of your website makes up less than 20% of the success of your site. It's the other 80% where the real profits lie.

THE MYTH: If you spend money on search engine optimization (SEO), you can get to the top of Google and get an endless stream of free customers.

THE TRUTH: If you mess with Google, they will ban your website forever and you'll be left with no customers. SEO is dead. There are much more effective ways of getting the customers you need online.

THE MYTH: You need to get your customers to 'Like' you on Facebook.

THE TRUTH: No, you don't. There are two things you **MUST** be doing on Facebook and getting people to 'Like' you is certainly not one of them.

THE MYTH: You need to be cheaper than your competitors or customers will go elsewhere.

THE TRUTH: This is dangerous nonsense. Battling it out at the low end on price is the fastest way of going out of business – especially in this economy. When you get your internet marketing right you can actually position yourself and your business **ABOVE** the competition – and attract customers who are happy to pay you more. But you've got to do it right and avoid the mistakes that so many business owners make.

This is all so important, we have created an exclusive video for you. What you will discover will clear up the confusion on internet marketing and change how you think about your business forever. If you are the owner of a UK business, you can access your FREE video now at www.FreeVideo50.com.

**Is Your Website Making
This Critical Mistake?**

There's one crucial element that needs to be

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in place within the first 8 seconds of someone visiting your website. Get this wrong and all of your hard work will be in vain. Get it right and your online sales can soar.

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Who Is In Charge Of Your Website?

You wouldn't go to a heart surgeon who had no track record of successful heart operations, would you?

So why give the job of making money online to people who have not created significant wealth on the internet?

Web designers are an important part of your team but they are called **DESIGNERS** for a reason: they design stuff. They hopefully design that stuff really well but that's got nothing to do with making you money online.

It's time for you to take back control! **YOU** need to know how to attract customers and make money online so you can be sure that the people you hire are doing a good job.

It's time for you to know what's working and what's not on the internet so you can tell your web designer what to do, rather than the other way around.

It's time that someone told you the blunt truth about what's wrong with your website, because...

It's NOT YOUR FAULT!

If you're like most business owners, you are frustrated at your website and internet marketing

and confused by all the conflicting opinions and advice.

But you must remember, these frustrations are **NOT YOUR FAULT!**

It's almost certain that you've not had access to the people and knowledge at the leading edge of what's working online.

You're just moments away from knowing more than your web designer about the 7 critical factors for making money online and the costly mistakes to avoid.

Not For The Faint Hearted

On your exclusive FREE video, you'll discover the blunt truth about your web site.

If you want everything sugar-coated for you and you're not ready for the open and honest truth from Britain's leading internet marketing expert do not go to your exclusive video. We are not out to offend anyone. But we cannot serve you properly unless we are totally honest and upfront with you.

The good news is, if you're open minded enough to give serious consideration to what you are about to discover on your special video, you can transform your website and possibly your entire business, often in 2 – 3 weeks at virtually no cost.

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Struggling to know what to ask for this year? The 2014 Gift List is here for gadget-driven inspiration

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● JOBY GRIPTIGHT SERIES / FROM £13

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www.joby.com

● TIMBER TONES PLECTRUM WALLET / £70 (WITH FREE SHIPPING TO THE UK)

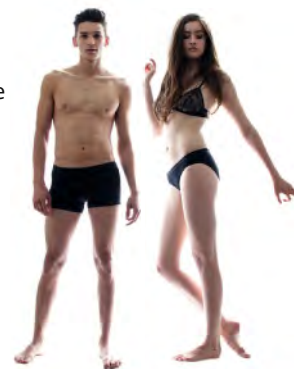
Timber Tones Plectrum Wallet is hand made in the UK using the finest British leather and filled with 18 exotic timber guitar plectrums.



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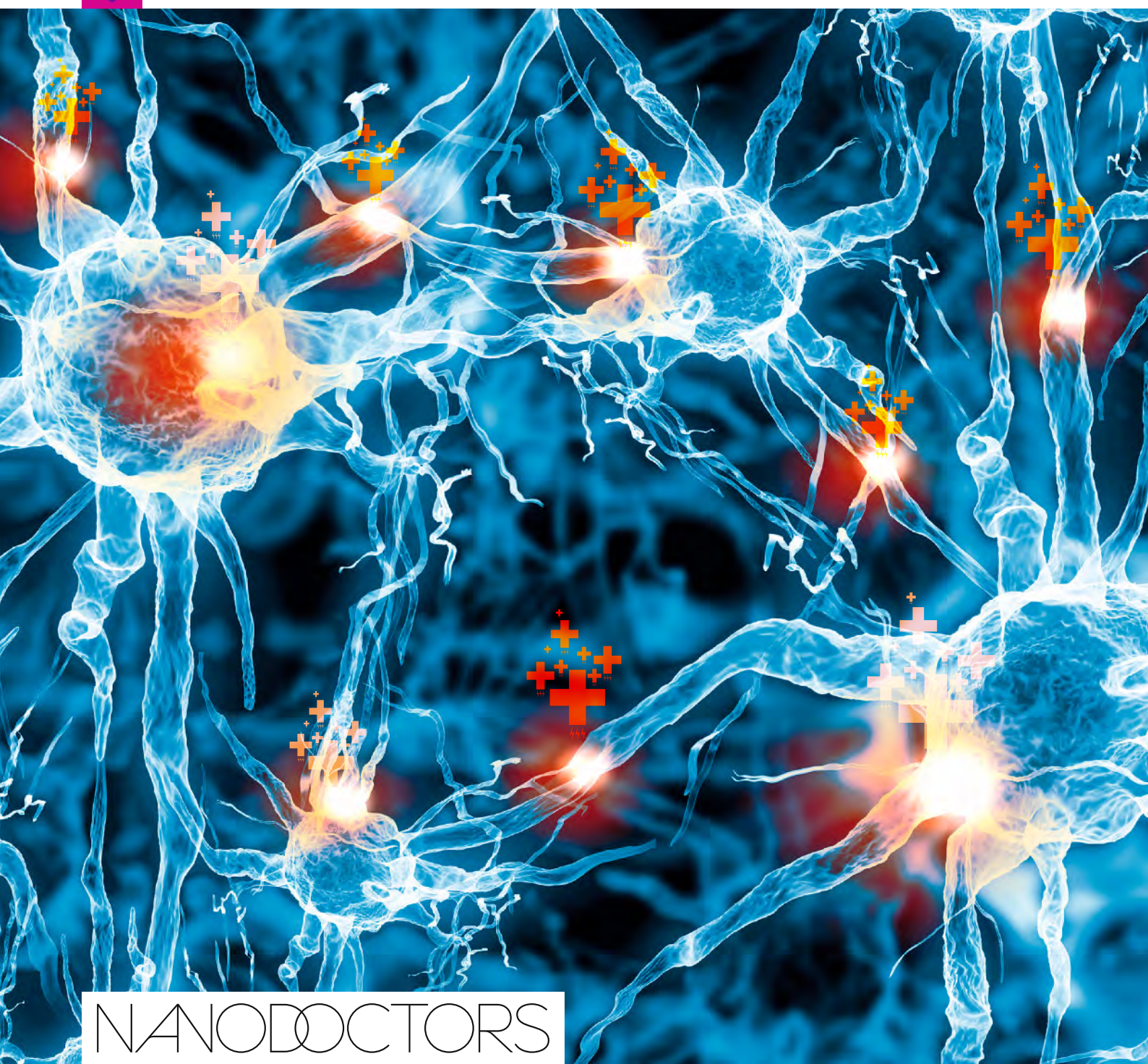
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NEXT BIG THING?



NANODOCTORS

Wait, they're making a sci-fi reboot of Doctors?

That would have all the makings of essential sick-day viewing. But this is even more exciting than the Mill Health Centre getting hit by a shrink ray. Google's mysterious X division (the one that dreams up its sci-fi 'moonshots') is working on a new 'nanoparticle platform' that will apparently help detect early signs of cancer and heart attacks. And don't worry, it doesn't involve injecting a mini *Doogie Howser MD* into your bloodstream. Though that would make a great sequel to *Innerspace*...

I don't care how it works. Google's not getting anywhere near my bloodstream...

You just wait until it announces Google Vein View. Anyway, isn't avoiding a massive cardiac arrest a good enough reason to get behind it? All you'll have to do is swallow a pill that contains tiny magnetic particles, which bind themselves to troublesome molecules and identify problems. Then it's just a case of using Google's wearable magnetic device to attract the magnets to certain locations and ask them what they've spotted: "Oooh, you've never seen so much arterial plaque!" "OK, I'll quit the doughnuts..."

Google Now is annoying enough without arterial plaque alerts...

Well, don't let the idea raise your blood pressure just yet. Privacy warriors will be pleased to hear that Google is planning to license the tech rather than collect data itself. And it won't be ready for at least another five years. There are big hurdles to overcome, including convincing regulators that swallowing tiny magnets has no major side-effects. Still, with a hundred of the smartest Googlers working on the project, it might not be too long before your prescription pills come stamped with a big 'G'.

[Words Mark Wilson]

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